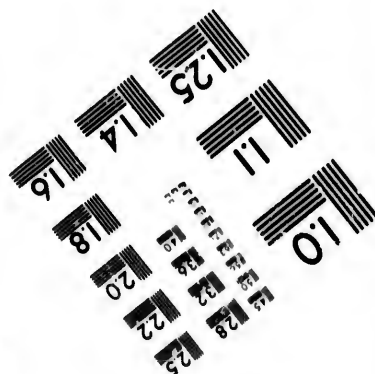
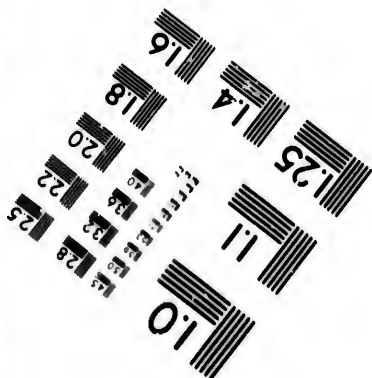
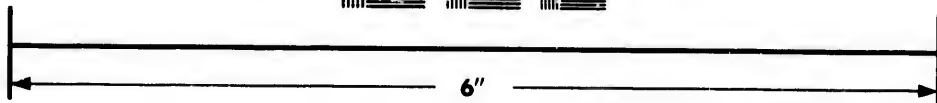
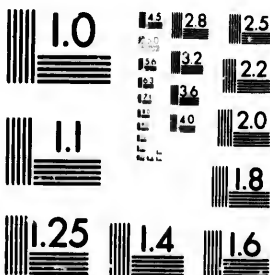


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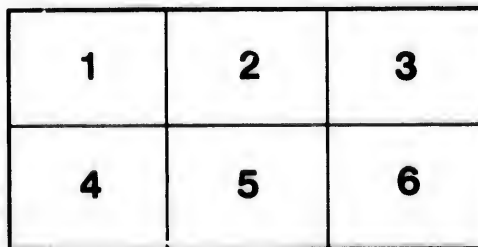
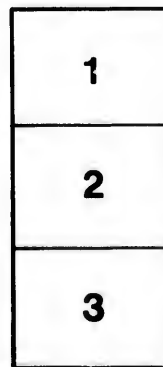
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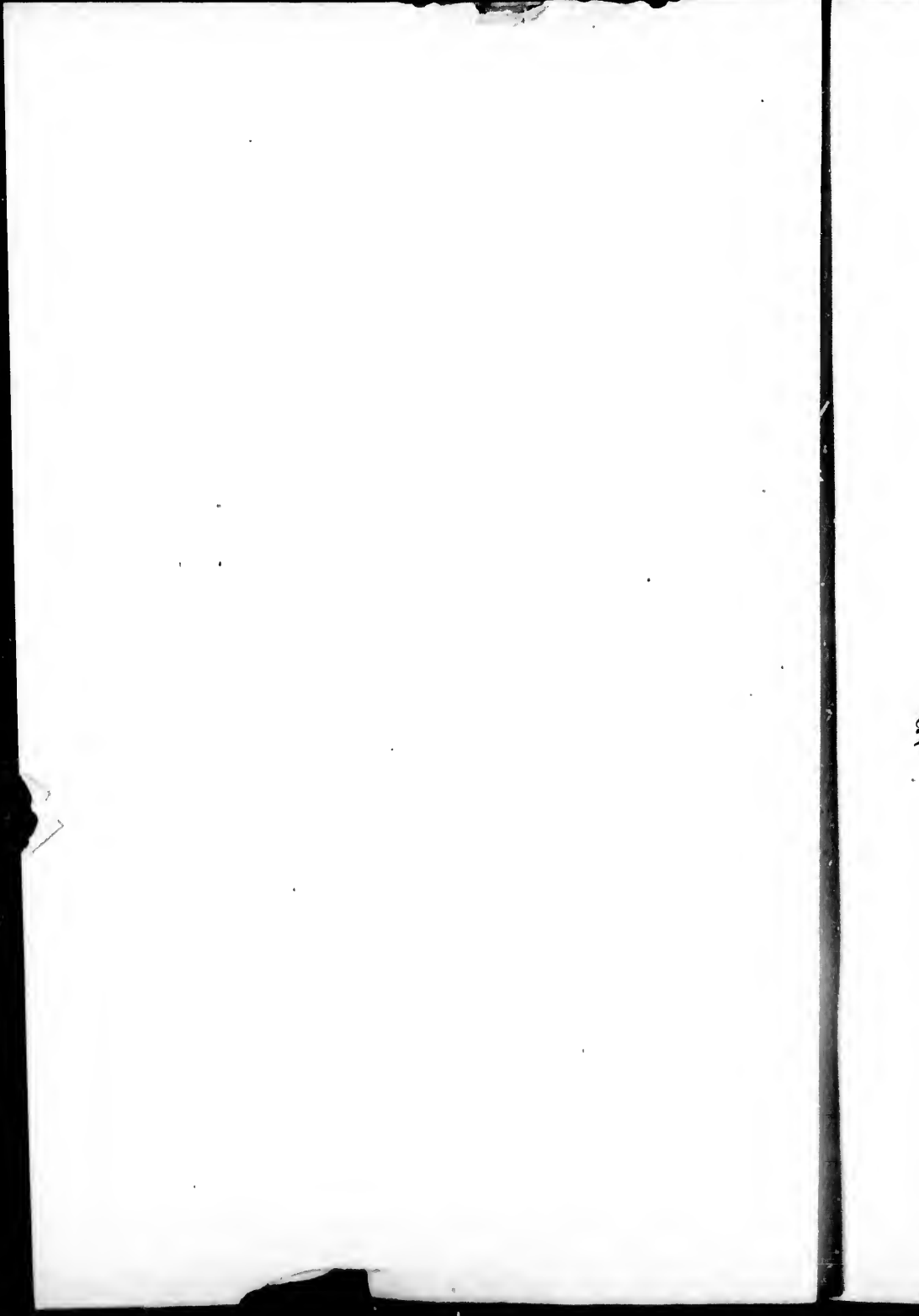
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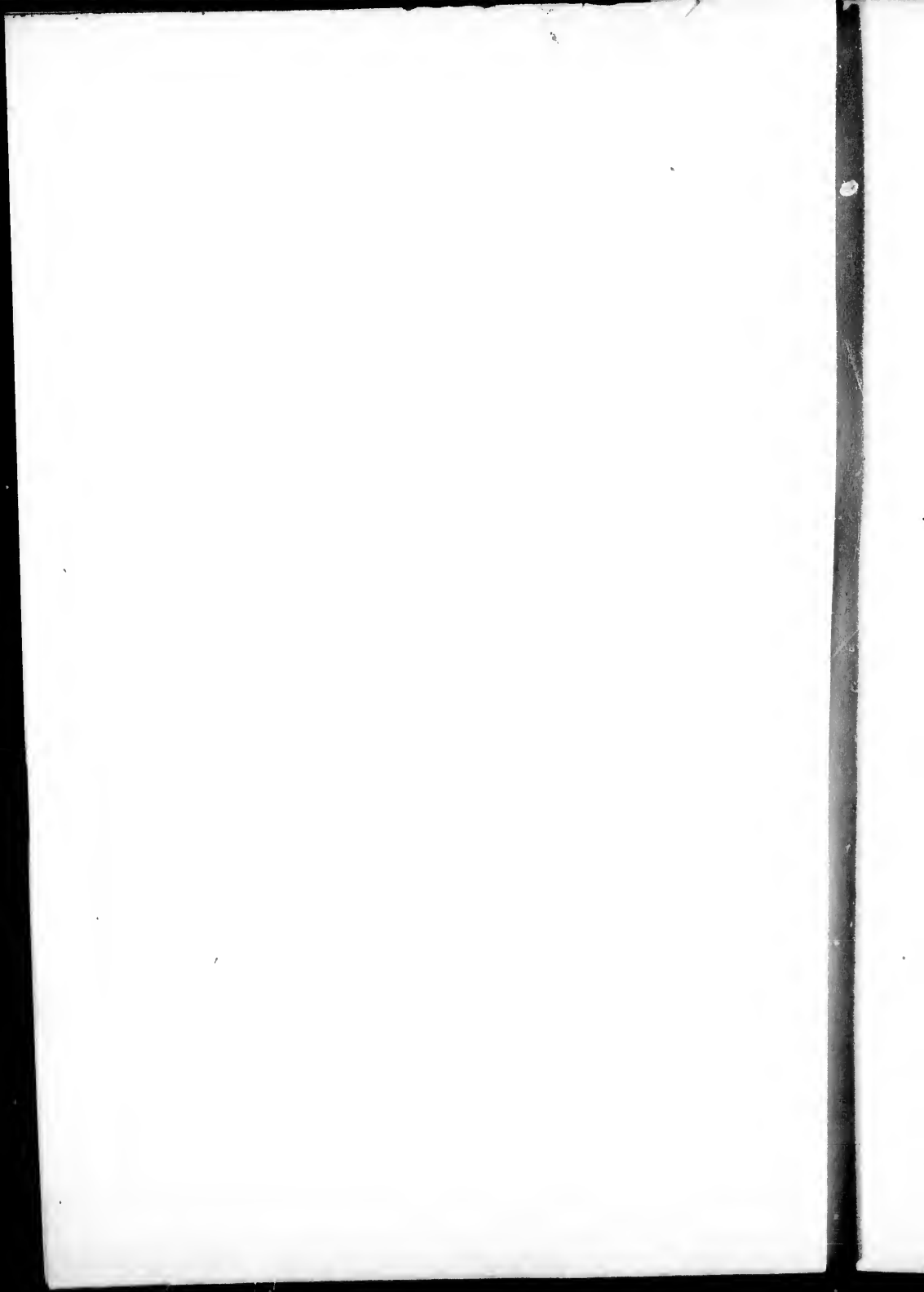
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EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES

ON THE

Epistle to the Ephesians.



EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES
ON
THE EPISTLE TO THE
EPHESIANS.

BY
REV. D. B. CAMERON,
ACTON.

Toronto :
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PREFACE.

AS authors often state some reasons, valid or otherwise, for troubling the public with a new book, the writer of the following discourses, in conformity with this practice, has to say that, some years ago his attention having been specially directed to the Epistle to the Ephesians, he found it so very rich that he resolved to study it with care. Before he proceeded far in this exercise he believed that not only his own edification, but also that of his congregation, might be promoted by preaching a series of sermons on the whole of it. Entertaining that view, he devoted a good part of his time for two years to the preparation of the discourses which form this volume. During the time of their delivery from the pulpit he was led to think of publishing them by the expressed desire of an intelligent hearer that certain discourses of the series should be printed, as also by the favourable opinion of them by ministerial brethren to whom some of them were read.

The author begs to advise the reader not to expect in this volume anything novel or fanciful, which goes so far to ensure popularity to literary productions; for, in composing these sermons, his aim was the instruction of his hearers, and, therefore, he did not wish to introduce anything in thought or style that might interfere with that object. Instead then of

distracting the minds of the people by the different interpretations of difficult passages by various expositors, he has simply stated what, after careful consideration, he had reason to believe to be the mind of the Spirit. In saying this, however, he does not mean that all his interpretations are undoubtedly correct, nor does he desire that every one who may read this book should, without any question, accept all his views; for such implicit confidence in any man with regard to religious matters would be idolatrous credulity. We are forbidden to call any man master, or to be so called, "for one is our Master, even Christ." The author has also excluded extracts from the learned criticisms on the authorized version and the Greek text which abound, because, since scholars have ready access to these, they would not thank him for introducing them in such a work as this, and to the common reader such lumber would be a useless annoyance, if not worse. Guided by these views, he hardly consulted, while writing these sermons, any expounders of the epistle but two, namely: the eminent Puritan, Dr. Thomas Goodwin, and the late Dr. Hodge, of Princeton, to both of whom he is not a little indebted. Hoping that the perusal of these sermons may help in the preservation of sound religious principles among the people, and also promote the spiritual edification of the devout reader, they are now given to the public with the author's prayer to God for their success.

D. B. CAMERON.

ACTON, *August, 1886.*

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EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES
ON THE
EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.

DISCOURSE I.

PAUL'S SALUTATION TO THE EPHESIANS.

Eph. i. 1, 2: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

THIS is considered one of the richest of Paul's epistles, and it seems that he so viewed it himself. In the third chapter, referring to the previous part of the epistle, as I think, he says, speaking of the revelation of the mystery of the Gospel made known to him: "As I wrote afore (already) in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ." Eph. iii. 3, 4. What was the occasion of his writing this epistle we are not distinctly told. It might be the uncomfortable apprehension that he had of the rising among them of false teachers who, to support their wicked errors, would

wrest the Scriptures to the ruin of many souls. In his interview with the elders of the Church he said : " For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Acts xx. 29, 30. Some time after this interview, remembering the danger to which the Church of Ephesus was exposed, he wrote to confirm them in the doctrines of the Gospel, and began the epistle with the usual apostolic salutation.

I. Notice the person who writes.

1. His name : " Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ."

He prefixed his name to all his epistles except that to the Hebrews, and he also mentioned his office in each of them except in those to the Philippians, Thessalonians, Philemon, and the Hebrews.

- The apostle is first introduced to our notice in the Acts of the Apostles by his Hebrew name Saul, by which he is called until he and Barnabas went to Cyprus, where they met Elymas the Sorcerer, a Jewish impostor, called also Bar-Jesus, who was patronized by the Governor of the Island, Sergius Paulus. When Barnabas and Saul explained the Christian religion to the Governor, this false prophet resisted them for fear he would lose his influence with his patron ; and this opposition so awakened Saul's indignation that he

rebuked him sharply, saying: "O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and darkness; and he went about seeking one to lead him by the hand. Then the deputy when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord." Acts xiii. 10-12. From that time the apostle is called Paul. Probably his name was so pronounced by the Governor of Cyprus and his friends because they were accustomed to say Paulus, and in the exercise of the prudence by which the apostle was always disposed to accommodate himself to the tastes and even prejudices of other people, he adopted the Roman name that sounded so nearly like his own, though not the same in sense: Saul means "asked," and Paul means "little." There is a tradition, in support of which there is, perhaps, some historical evidence, that the apostle was of small stature: some say three cubits, that is, four feet and a half. In that case the new name, expressive of his size, was likely given to him by the Romans for that reason, and he, instead of rejecting it as an insult to him, meekly accepted it as the name by which he has since been known. As this is conjecture, we drop the subject.

2. His official title was "an apostle of Jesus Christ."

When Saul, the noted persecutor, was converted he preached the Gospel in Damascus, and proved with such power that Christ was the promised Messiah that "all that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?" Acts ix. 21. On account of his early opposition to Christ and the Gospel, he called himself "the least of the apostles," and "not meet to be called an apostle," 1 Cor. xv. 9. Though he had so low a view of himself on account of his early life, which he regarded with regret, yet he was appointed an apostle by Jesus Christ. He was chosen to the most honourable office that was ever conferred on any creature, whether angelic or human. "God hath set in the Church, first (higher in rank) apostles." 1 Cor. xii. 28. It was the next dignity to that of Christ himself. The high priesthood was the most exalted rank under the law, but the apostleship was more honourable because it superseded it. Both titles are given to Christ himself, because he is so much more exalted than all his servants; he is called "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession."

3. Observe that the founder of the apostolic office is Jesus Christ: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ."
Christ chose the apostles to the high dignity of

ambassadors for him, and sends forth all the ministers of the Gospel as his messengers to men. He himself is the Father's messenger because he was sent by him to finish the work to which he was appointed, and to act as God's minister plenipotentiary in his negotiations with sinners. He received plenary power, not only to act personally, but to send forth ambassadors with all needed instructions, qualifications, and authority to discharge the duties entrusted to them. When set apart to the work, he said to them: "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." John xx. 21, 22. When the Lord arrested Saul of Tarsus in his career as persecutor, "and he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? . . . he said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." Acts ix. 6. At what particular time the Lord formally appointed him to the apostolic office we are not distinctly told, but himself clearly says that he was called to it by Christ: "I testify to you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Gal. i. 11, 12. When Christ ascended on high, "he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the

ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Eph. iv. 11, 12. As he instituted in the Church all the offices that, in his unerring wisdom, he saw necessary to its prosperity, anything beyond that, which men have invented, has not his sanction. Those who, therefore, presume to occupy such unauthorized positions are daring usurpers. The titles given to offices of human devising may be lofty and high-sounding, but they have no real dignity. Ministers in the Church who can only be acceptable to Christ, receive their commissions in the way appointed by himself to act in an office created by him, otherwise they are false apostles.

4. Observe that the Person who designed Paul for the apostolic office was God the Father. "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God." "It pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen." Gal. i. 15, 16.

God, by a special decree, purposed to prepare, and in due time to set him apart for the apostleship, so he could say of himself, "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God." Rom. i. 1. Having been elected by God for this work, he knew that this great honour was by the good will of God conferred upon him, not on account of any excellency in himself. He reckoned this favour as next

only to his salvation. "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious." 1 Tim. i. 12, 13. Paul's honour was greater than that of the other apostles, inasmuch as the Lord, in a miraculous way, called him after he had risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven. The other apostles were called by Christ when living on earth, except Matthias, who, by the disciples, was chosen along with Barsabas Justus, but designated to the apostleship by the Lord, whose mind in the matter was made known through the lots cast by the other apostles; whereas Christ appeared to Paul in glory, and intimated his will to him by Divine revelation.

II. Notice those whom the apostle saluted. "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus."

1. Observe that they are described as "saints and faithful in Christ Jesus."

This was the ordinary way in which Paul styled the members of the churches to which he addressed his epistles. "Paul, . . . to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints." Rom. i. 7. "But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints." Rom. xv. 25. "Paul, . . . unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in

Christ Jesus, called to be saints." 1 Cor. i. 2. "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia." 2 Cor. i. 1. The title saints is in modern days popularly regarded as proper only to a few eminent believers in the past, including the apostles; but to speak of the whole body of the disciples of Christ as saints is considered by many as something bordering on profanity. There must be some reason for this change of sentiment on the subject. It may be a consciousness of inconsistency in life with the character indicated by the term. Many professors of religion secretly feel that, if they were called saints, it would be unsuitable to them, if not an insult. This feeling seems to be a proof of our want of spirituality. When real devoutness diminished, people ceased to use the name saints, and the Pope reserved it for a few persons who were, for the most part, remarkable only for absurd austerities but not for true godliness.

The apostle called the saints at Ephesus "faithful," and meant thereby that they were true believers, whose profession of faith and obedience was sincere. In the language of Solomon godly men are called faithful. "Most men will proclaim every one his own godness: but a faithful man who can find?" Prov. xx. 6. Paul recommended to Timothy to "commit the things that" he had "heard of" him "among many witnesses, . . . to faithful men, who" should "be able to teach others

also." 2 Tim. ii. 2. In an evangelical sense, a faithful man means a believer. "Be not faithless, but believing." John xx. 27. Besides the possession of faith, the word implies that believers are men of steadfast integrity.

From the application of the two words, "faithful" and "saints," to the same people, we may see that faith and holiness are by God joined together. As the devil would separate them, in many cases he leads men to think that if they believe the doctrines held by the branch of the Church in which they are members they shall be saved, though wholly destitute of holiness; and he leads others to believe, that, if virtuous in life, faith of any kind is not necessary. The latter opinion is becoming prevalent in Christian lands. Agnosticism, which is but another name for Atheism, is, we regret to say, making considerable progress in this day among the ungodly. Many, though blessed with the Gospel, do not like to retain God in their knowledge because they do not love the truth, and on that account there is danger, as in former times, that God will give "them over to a reprobate mind," and "send them strong delusion, that they may believe a lie; that they all" may "be damned who" believe "not the truth, but" have "pleasure in unrighteousness."

2. The residence of these saints and faithful people, to whom the epistle was addressed, was Ephesus, one of the most luxurious, dissolute, and superstitious cities in

the whole world. It is said that the rulers of Ephesus enacted a law that any man who would presume to excel others in frugality, temperance, or any virtue, should be expelled from the community. The licentious rites that were practised in the worship of Diana cannot be named. God, out of this people, chose saints and faithful people, who, before their conversion, "in time past, . . . walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. Among whom also" they "had" their "conversation in times past in the lusts of" their "flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Eph. ii. 2, 3. In our natural judgment Ephesus was one of the last cities where we would expect a holy church to be gathered: seeing the people wallowed in vice, in consequence of the sanction given to the vilest practices by their religion. Many in that city were soothsayers; but not a few of them were spiritually enlightened. When these "believed" they "came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men; and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver." Acts xix. 18, 19.

3. Saints stand in a very interesting relationship to Christ.

They are not only in Christ by union to him, but what they are as saints, they are so in Christ. Many are religious and moral without Christ, but the religion and morality of true believers are of a different nature—for they spring from Christ, who continually supports them by the gracious operations of his Spirit. True holiness is wrought in those only who are in Christ, those who are “created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” Eph. ii. 10. Whatever is good in God’s people is imparted by Christ, and he sustains in healthy exercise the spiritual principles which he creates in them by the continual production of pure motives in their hearts. Paul’s admonition to Timothy applies to all believers, “My son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” 2 Tim. ii. 1. There is considerable danger in trusting in the grace that we already have, which, if it were enough for the present, would not serve for the future. The faith that we had yesterday is not sufficient for to-day: we must always receive fresh supplies for our varied necessities. For that end we must maintain communion with Christ. “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.” John xv. 4.

III. Notice the matter of the salutation. “Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Salutations are friendly expressions of good wishes which kindness prompts us to exchange with our friends, and the Gospel does not destroy the exercise of pure feelings, but purifies them. It ennobles the courtesies of the genial intercourse of neighbours. Rudeness would not much recommend the religion of Jesus Christ. The truth is, that nothing so successfully humanizes men as true godliness. Piety alone may not train the peasant in courtly breeding, but it invariably makes the rudest gentle and courteous. The good training which the apostle received in his youth grace so improved that it made him a model of kindliness. We find salutations similar to this one in all his epistles, and, seeing that they are inspired by the Holy Ghost, they efficiently convey the blessings that are pronounced.

1. Observe that he wishes grace and peace to his believing friends.

The good will and peaceful purposes of God are the fountains from which all blessings flow to us: and, as these are inexhaustible, the streams that issue from them to those who are brought into living connection with Christ never fail. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." John iv. 14. "He that believeth in me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." John vii. 38.

To all these the fountain of life shall be given to refresh them for ever. When justified, grace and peace are imparted by God. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. v. i. The peace which meets believers at the beginning of their Christian course shall increasingly accompany them until at last it shall become perfect, unbroken, and eternal peace. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace." Ps. xxxvii. 37.

2. Observe that these blessings are conferred by God the Father and by Jesus Christ. "Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

God bestows his grace upon us, not as our Creator, but as our Father in Christ, in token of his redeeming love. The Father is called the God of all grace and the God of peace; Christ is called the Prince of peace; and the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace. The grace and peace which come from God with effectual power exert sanctifying influences upon us. The more we appreciate them, the more are they communicated to us, and the greater is our capacity to receive them. The best saints need daily supplies of grace and peace; they also need that their knowledge of their value to them should be daily increased. Let us, therefore, wait daily upon God for fresh supplies: for his store is inexhaustible, and his benevolence is unbounded.

Sinners : Whatever you think of the matter, you greatly need the grace and peace which God in his benevolence offers to you. If you refuse them you shall have no peace for ever, because God will be your adversary. "There is no peace, saith the LORD, to the wicked." Isa. xlvi. 22. If not prepared for such a dismal end, turn to God who says : "Fury is not in me : who would set the briers and thorns before me in battle ? I would go through them, I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me ; and he shall make peace with me." Isa. xxvii. 4, 5.

DISCOURSE II.

A DOXOLOGY.

Eph. i. 3 : "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

THE apostle abruptly breaks out in a song of praise to God as he thinks of the manifestations of his power in giving him such success in Ephesus that many were "quicken'd who were dead in trespasses and sins," and who "in time past . . . walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Eph. ii. 1, 2. After giving

utterance to his feelings, he enumerates the blessings that God bestowed upon them as the fruit of his ministry. He laboured for three years among them, "serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell" him "by the lying in wait of the Jews; and" he "kept back nothing that was profitable unto" them, "but . . . showed" them "and . . . taught" them "publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Acts xx. 19-21. He sowed in tears, but reaped with a joy so great that he could not restrain himself from giving utterance to it in praise to God for his goodness in making his labours so abundantly fruitful. He ascribed all to the mercy and bounty of God. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

I. Notice the matter of this doxology. "Blessed be God."

In all ages the saints were wont to bless God when they appreciated his character and loving-kindness. Though we cannot add to his blessedness, he is pleased with our praises and adorations.

I. Observe that we bless God when we speak well of him, and express our interest in his great enterprise, the salvation of his people.

True friends find pleasure in declaring the worth of each other, and in hearing it proclaimed. It may be regarded as an evidence of godliness when people delight in hearing God praised for his acts of power and grace. We rejoice in the attainments of our friends, and we congratulate them on their success in their undertakings. God commands us to rejoice in his goodness, and permits us to praise him for his mighty deeds. The Scriptures contain many exhortations to this effect. "Give unto the LORD, O ye mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship him in the beauty of holiness." Ps. xxix. 1, 2. "Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous; for praise is comely for the upright. Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise." Ps. xxxiii. 1-3. "O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph." Ps. xlvi. 1. "O sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory." Ps. xcvi. 1. God loves his people's commendations. Though he is the Blessed One, yet he delights to hear the saints extol his name. Though Christ's success in his mediatorial work is settled in the purpose of God, and though the Father ascribes the highest honours to him, yet the Church is prompted by

the Spirit to pray for the prosperity of his kingdom. It is becoming in his people to magnify his name. God says to him: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre"; and the Church says to him: "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O Most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth and meekness and righteousness." "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosannah in the highest!" Mat. xxi. 9. "Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen." Ps. lxxii. 18, 19.

2. To bless God with acceptance we need to know and appreciate his worth.

Unless we truly love God because we know him savingly, our utterances of praise are not sincere. The Saviour says that mere formal professors will be disowned by him at the great day. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Matt. vii. 22, 23. Hypocrites may profess to love God, but he is not deceived by their pretensions. It was foretold that

his enemies would flatter him. "The strangers shall submit (shall feign obedience) unto me." Ps. xviii. 44. "Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant." Ps. lxxviii. 36, 37. Wicked men and devils shall be forced to acknowledge the sovereignty of Christ. "At the name of Jesus every knee" shall "bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and . . . every tongue" shall "confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Phil. ii. 10, 11. The confession of the wicked will not be cordial, but extorted from them, as was the case in the days of Christ's humiliation, when devils, compelled by fear, declared him to be the Son of God, and though very unwillingly, they immediately obeyed him. None but holy creatures can possibly bless God with good will. The saints do more than praise God, for the Psalmist says: "All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power." Ps. cxlv. 10, 11. They bless the Lord with their whole mind. "Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me bless his holy name." Ps. ciii. 1. This is the highest exercise of religious worship in which a creature can engage, and to be able to take a part in it, we need the knowledge of God, sound faith, spiritual liberty, and assur-

ance of hope. In order to praise him heartily we need to be able to love him for what he is in himself, for his glorious acts, for his gracious revelation of his counsel with regard to the salvation of his people, and for the rich blessings he has bestowed upon ourselves. Whoever can form a proper estimate of God will often, like the apostle, break out in exclamations of "blessed be God."

II. Notice the title given to God in the doxology.
"The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

1. He is called the God of Christ.

He is not only our God, but also the God of Christ. This title is given to him in various places in the Scriptures. Christ on the cross addressed him as such: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Mat. xxvii. 46. "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." John xx. 17. There is some difficulty in clearly understanding the sense in which God is the God of his own eternal Son, who is equal to him in all Divine attributes. Christ has two natures; he is God and man in one person, so that things are attributed to him which are true of one nature but not of the other. When it is said that he was born, grew in body and spirit, ate, drank, slept, grieved, suffered, and died, these are true of his human, but not of his Divine nature; and on the

other hand, when it is said that he healed diseases by a touch or a word, multiplied a few loaves of bread and two small fishes, and raised the dead, we know that such acts were done by his Divine nature. The Son of God, as to his Divine nature, is the Father's equal, and it may not therefore be regarded proper to call him his God in that respect ; but we are safe in regarding him as the God of the Person who is both God and man. He is his God inasmuch as he appointed him to the mediatorial office. We are redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, . . . who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world." 1 Peter i. 19, 20. His human nature was predestinated for a union with his Divine nature, and to receive all the grace that would be necessary to qualify him for the discharge of his work. Though he claimed to be the Father's equal, "I and my Father are one," yet seeing that justly he acknowledged himself to be his servant, as such, and also with regard to his human nature, he is inferior to him, and dependent upon him. "My Father is greater than I."

God is the God of Christ in virtue of the covenant of redemption made with him on behalf of the seed promised to him, as he was the God of Abraham in virtue of the covenant made with him, wherein God promised to be a God to him and to his seed after him. In Old Testament days his ordinary title was "the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of

Jacob;" but in New Testament days it is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," and therefore the God of all united to Christ. God was prophetically called by this new title in the Old Testament: "God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." Ps. xlv. 7. The Messiah is represented in the sixteenth Psalm as saying: "O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord." "The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance." Ps. xvi. 2, 5. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Ps. xxii. 1.

God is the God of Christ, inasmuch as he depended on him for needed support, as his refuge in times of distress, and also because he obeyed him. He received instructions from God with regard to his work, and acted in accordance with them. "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." John v. 30. "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." John v. 19.

2. God is called the Father of Christ.

This is true of Christ both as God and man. As God he is the Father's eternal and only begotten Son. In this sense no one else is God's son. The Jews understood Christ to claim that relationship to God, and therefore "sought . . . to kill him, because

he . . . said . . . that God was his Father, making himself equal with God." John v. 18. They correctly understood that his claim to be the Son of God implied equality to him. Being the only begotten Son of God, he is the same in substance; and this cannot be true of any creature, angelic or human. Holy angels are the sons of God by creation, but believers are the sons of God by regeneration and adoption; but neither of them are sons necessarily. He is distinct from all other sons of God: "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?" Heb. i. 5. It is from him that believers receive the right to become the sons of God. "As many as received him, to them gave he power (right) to become the sons of God." John i. 12. The scriptural apprehension of this relationship of Christ to God is a matter of real importance to us; for the apostle John regarded this truth of such practical value that he wrote the Gospel in support of it. "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." John xx. 31.

Christ is the Son of God as man. Peter's answer was correct, when, in reply to his Master's question, "Whom do ye say . . . that I the Son of man am?" he said: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Mat. xvi. 16. It was for asserting this truth that Christ was put to death. "The high priest

asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am. . . . Then the high priest rent his clothes, and said, What need we any further witness?" Mark xiv. 61-63. This is such a mystery that no one can obtain a proper conception of it without the operation of the Spirit of God in opening his understanding to know the truth. Christ said to Peter when he answered his question: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Mat. xvi. 17. The human nature of Christ is not only the Son of God in virtue of creation, but also in virtue of personal union to his Divine nature. He is not two Sons of God, Divine and human, but one Son who has two natures in one person.

3. Observe that God is the God and Father of believers in virtue of their spiritual and federal union to Christ.

As Christ is the Head, and believers the members of his mystical body, his Father is their Father, and his God their God. On this account each of them is interested in Christ's dignities, because all the rewards and honours that are due to him as Mediator belong to them. Seeing then that he is their Lord, in whom they are exalted and blessed, they are commanded to honour and obey him. "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the King greatly desire

thy beauty ; for he is thy Lord ; and worship thou him.”
Ps. xlv. 10, 11.

III. This leads me to notice the Apostle's reason for this doxology. “Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”

As God only is the Blessed One, he alone can bless us efficiently. When we bless each other, as parents do their children ; ministers, the people ; and friend, friend, no actual blessing is really conferred, but merely a prayer to God to bestow it ; and when we bless God we do no more than to declare him blessed. God blesses his people effectually by the bestowal upon them of valuable gifts.

1. God blesses us by becoming our God.

God is so full of blessedness that it is his pleasure to communicate blessings to his creatures, “Thou art good,” says the Psalmist, “and doest good.” In order to impart the highest favours, God becomes the God of his people. Having entered into that relationship to them, he richly blesses them ; for then, “God, even” their “own God, shall bless them.” Ps. lxxvii. 6. When he becomes our God he cannot but bless us ; for then the obstacles to the coming forth of his goodness to us are removed. As the sun communicates light and heat to the earth, so does God impart his blessing to all who are united to Christ. Having elected them to be his

own by an eternal choice, he made a donation of them to his own son. As he became then their God in his unalterable purpose, he therefore blesses them "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

2. God blesses his people as their Father.

It is not unlikely that the custom of solemnly invoking a blessing on others began with affectionate parents, or with persons who were ministerially related to others. Melchizedec, as the priest of the Most High God, blessed Abraham, the patriarchs blessed their sons, and down to this day godly parents on important occasions formally bless their children. This custom is undoubtedly approved by God, and when performed in faith it is by him made effectual. If a good father would convey to his son, if he could, the reality of the blessing that he pronounces, God, who is omnipotent, will certainly give all good things to his adopted children. Christ referred to this truth when he encouraged his disciples to pray. "What man is there of you," said he, "whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" Mat. vii. 9-11. He will certainly do this because it was for that purpose he established the relationship of Father and children between himself and his people.

3. He blesseth us by imparting precious benefits to us, such as justification, pardon, adoption, sanctification, and eternal glory. Being justified and adopted we have access to him as his dear children, and, in Gospel times, all blessings are promised, not as in Old Testament days, under a temporal, but under a spiritual aspect. He blesses us with all spiritual blessings, not in an earthly country, but in heavenly places.

When meditating on these blessings that God bestows on his people we do well to consider what value we attach to them. All men desire blessings, whether they recognize God or not as the giver of them; but those who do not savingly know God can appreciate temporal blessings only, for spiritual things have no attractions for them. Their heart says: "Who will show us any good?" "What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" but "the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," they cannot seek. It is true that they wish to go to heaven, but the kingdom of God, which "is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," they do not desire. If we love holiness, and prize communion with God, we have an evidence of our sonship, and may rely on our Father's love to "bless us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." But let all observe that no one has a title to these blessings unless he is born again, and adopted into God's family. Therefore, sinners, pray to God to

regenerate you by his Spirit, and translate you from darkness to light, and from the family of Satan into that of Christ.

DISCOURSE III.

ELECTION.

Eph. i. 4: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."

IN the preceding verse there is the general statement that God hath blessed his people "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." These blessings are noticed in detail in this and some following verses. At present we will confine our attention to that of election. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."

I. Notice God's gracious choice of his people. "He hath chosen us in him."

1. Observe that individuals are the objects of this Divine choice. "He hath chosen *us*."

In this statement the apostle refers to himself and all believers, not only those who lived then in Ephesus, but also those who have lived in all places and times. Some, in their dislike to the doctrine of election of per-

sons from eternity, say that God chose nations and a particular character to certain privileges, but not distinct persons. To this we say that nations consist of men, and that character separate from individuals is a mere abstraction.

2. The saints are said to be chosen in Christ. "According as he hath chosen us *in him*."

Some say that they were chosen because it was foreseen that they would savingly believe, and so become united to Christ. They argue that as no one is in Christ until he rests on him by faith, one could not, therefore, be chosen in Christ, but as God foresaw that he would be in him. We reply that, if this were so, God's act in election would depend, not on his own good will freely exercised, but on the creature's conduct, and but the text speaks of persons. "According as he hath that election is a choosing of acts rather than persons; chosen *us*." It is for men, and not for acts, that Christ died. The preceding verse says that God "hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," and in this and following verses the apostle refers to several of these blessings, commencing with election, or God's choosing his people in Christ. We also find that faith is one of these blessings; for it is wrought in the subjects of it "according to the working of" God's "mighty power." Those who believe must, in some sense, be in Christ before they obtain the blessing; for though they are actually out of Christ

until they believe in him, God chose his people in Christ that they "should be holy and without blame before him in love," and in order that this end should be secured, he chose them to believe. Holiness and faith are connected as effect and cause. "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification and belief of the truth." 2 Thess. ii. 13.

Others maintain that the meaning is that they were chosen for the merits of Christ. Though the Scriptures say that "we have redemption through" the "blood" of Christ, it is nowhere said that we are chosen "through" his blood, and the reason is that the Divine act of election is the foundation of our salvation. It is God's intention of saving us, and has no other cause than "the good pleasure of his will," and "the praise of the glory of his grace." It is correct to say that the merits of Christ procured our salvation, but not our election. He purchased all things that God purposed to bestow upon us, but not the Divine purpose itself. Had God chosen us on account of the merits of Christ, then election would not be of grace but of debt; and with regard to it Christ would be entitled to our gratitude, but not the Father.

Others teach that God chose us to be in Christ in the fulness of time. This is correct, but it is not the whole truth; for the expression "in Christ" in the text means our federal union to him in the covenant of redemption. When the Son of God was by the Father

chosen to be the representative Head of the people given to him, they were chosen in him to faith, holiness, and eternal glory. His election would have no meaning if they had not been elected in him at the same time. His election was their election, because as head he was the root from whom they were to spring. When God created Adam he virtually created all mankind in him, because he was the stock from which they were to spring, and when, in blessing the first pair, he said: "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it," he blessed the human race. Adam and Eve did not personally in their day replenish and subdue the earth, but great progress has been made towards this since their death. Let us suppose the citizens of the United States to resolve, in constitutional order, to change the form of their general government, and, instead of an elective president, agree and determine to set up a hereditary monarchy, and, by a solemn act of the legislature, settle the transmission of the regal dignity from father to son, or any other legal heir, for ever. A king is accordingly elected, and in this act all the heirs to his royal honours are elected in him. There is, however, this difference between such electing act of a people and that of God in choosing Christ as the Head of the Church; they do not know all the persons included in their choice of a king, but God knew all included in the representative whom he had chosen; for all of them were then in his mind, and he elected them in Christ.

3. Observe that those here referred to were chosen in Christ "before the foundation of the world." If this is so, they were in Christ "before the foundation of the world," and they were chosen, not because it was foreseen that they would be in Christ by faith, nor on account of the merits of Christ, but that they should become really united to Christ by faith; and that all obstacles to their restoration to the favour of God should be removed, the Son of God was appointed to die for them in due time, that he would render it possible in accordance with justice, to apply to each of them, at the appointed time, the redemption purchased by Christ.

The phrase, "before the foundation of the world," signifies from eternity, and is equivalent to the Evangelist's statement that Christ "was in the beginning with God," and also to that in the book of Proverbs, where Wisdom is represented as saying: "I was set up from everlasting; from the beginning, or ever the earth was." Prov. viii. 23. In the last cited passage, "from everlasting," "from the beginning," and "ever the earth was," are synonymous. We see then that "before the foundation of the world" means "from everlasting," and that therefore the elect were chosen from eternity. If it be granted that God has chosen believers to everlasting life, does choose any now, or will choose such in the future, all his purposes are eternal, for he does not form new plans in time as we do to meet emergencies,

or because we get fresh knowledge concerning things. If he acted in that manner he would be changeable, because he would be dependent on the source of his additional knowledge, and would not therefore be an infinite, omniscient and immutable Being. Though, beyond certain limits, these truths are too high for us, yet since they are revealed for the edification and consolation of believers, it is our duty to accept them, as they are taught in Scripture, that we may be practically benefited by them.

If God chose a people from eternity, it is because he loved them. We see then that the love of God is not a temporary feeling, but an everlasting affection wherein there is no fickleness nor the slightest danger of its ever being withdrawn from the objects of it. We do not expect that a man of honourable character will readily change his sentiments with regard to the objects of his love, and if he does, we shall be so much disappointed in him that our respect for him will be considerably diminished. If, therefore, any people believe that God may cast away at last, as reprobates, some persons whom he loves, their estimate of his character cannot be very high, nor can their confidence in him be very strong. It is not in our nature to trust a person of an inconstant disposition. God loved his people from eternity with a love so strong that he chose them in Christ, and resolved to give him for them to be a sacrifice to satisfy justice on their behalf. "For God so loved the world,

that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John iii. 16. What value do we then set on the love of God? The psalmist so appreciated his goodness that he joyfully sang: "I will love thee, O LORD, my strength." Ps. xviii. 1. "I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications." Ps. cxvi. 1. "How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings." Ps. xxxvi. 7. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Ps. lxxiii. 25, 26. As God valued his people more than the whole world, we should love him more than all things, however desirable they may be. These are the terms on which any one can be a disciple of Christ: "He that loveth father or mother more than me," says the Lord, "is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." Mat. x. 37, 38.

God's power, wisdom and faithfulness are such that he makes all things combine to promote the welfare of the objects of his love. "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Rom. viii. 28. "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present,

or things to come ; all are yours." 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22. Such is God's regard for them that his wisdom, power, love, mercy, and all his attributes are engaged to secure their everlasting blessedness. They cannot, therefore, be finally destroyed. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me : and I give unto them eternal life ; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all ; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." John x. 27-29. The apostle triumphantly says : "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. viii. 38, 39. If we then cultivated heavenly-mindedness and lived in communion with God as we ought, we could afford to say, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea ; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." Ps. xlv. 1-4.

- II. Notice the purpose for which they are chosen.
"He hath chosen us in him . . . that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."

1. I take the apostle here to mean that perfect holiness which shall be attained when the saints take their departure from this world to glory ; for it is only then they shall be without blame before him. No creature can then accuse them of sin, as God will see no fault in them, for they shall be without "spot or wrinkle, or any such thing," but "holy and without blemish." Eph. v. 27. Because they are God's workmanship it would be discreditable to him if any moral stain or defect remained in them. Believers are holy in this world, but they have many imperfections ; they are not blameless before God ; they have many "spots and wrinkles," but they sincerely strive after perfection, so that with Paul, they earnestly wish to "know" Christ, "and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death ; if by any means" they may "attain unto the resurrection of the dead." Phil. iii. 10, 11. They "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Phil. iii. 14. He who planted this holy ambition in their souls will not disappoint them ; otherwise their spiritual aspirations would be a deception, but the God of truth will fulfil their desires. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness ; for they shall be filled." Mat. v. 6.

2. We must not overlook the important truth that he, who ordained his people to perfect holiness in heaven, also ordained them to holiness in this life :

he chose them "to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." 2 Thes. ii. 13.

An entrance into heaven is impossible to all who are not made holy in this life; for into the celestial city "there shall in no wise enter . . . any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." Rev. xxi. 27. It is the pure in heart that shall see God. Without holiness "no man shall see the Lord." Heb. xii. 14. Though it is in heaven that the saints are absolutely pure, yet there is a sense in which they are blameless in this world; the spiritual life which is infused into them is perfectly sinless, so that it is said of such as have this life that they do "not commit sin," being "born of God." "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." 1 John iii. 9, 10. The new creature in them does not sin, but makes them sincere in their desire to be holy. They pray that they may do God's will on earth as it is done in heaven, and they honestly wish that God would give them grace to enable them to do so. If they commit sin, they confess it to God with godly sorrow. Their blamelessness is more manifest to God than to men. They are unlike those, who, being merely whited sepulchres like the Scribes and Pharisees in the days of Christ on earth, appear fair before the world though wicked before God, but from whom God often tears the covering that they may appear in their naked

deformity. People "of corrupt minds" who are "reprobate concerning the faith, . . . shall proceed no further" than God permits; "for their folly shall be manifest unto all men." 2 Tim. iii. 9, 10. God commands his people to be sincere before him, nor does he approve of less. He said to Abraham, when on one occasion he deviated from the way of holiness through temptation, "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect." Gen. xvii. 1. Believing servants are commanded to act uprightly in their duty to their masters in the sight of God. "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God." Col. iii. 22. We should regard ourselves as always in the sight of God; and this believers endeavour to do. The diligent cultivation of this thought is valuable; for it is a means of comfort and protection. To be conscious of God's presence as our Father is a source of great consolation, and it protects a man from yielding to many temptations to sin. "How . . . can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God," was the answer of a good man when powerfully enticed to the commission of sin.

3. Believers are chosen to be holy before God in love.

It is in proportion as men honestly cultivate holiness in this life that they delight in God and enjoy his presence, particularly in the ordinances of the Gospel. Such find all the holy exercises of the Sabbath, both

private and public, instructive and refreshing. They go to God's house, if not with gladness, for the most part at least, with desire of communion with God. In those who thus delight in him he has such pleasure that he reveals himself to them. The more they see his face, the more they serve him affectionately.

Seeing then that it is God's great aim that we should be holy, and so fitted for everlasting blessedness, that the glory of his loving-kindness to us may be displayed for ever, and his own affections towards us may be eternally satisfied, it becomes us to strive earnestly after conformity to his will. As this end was his purpose, let weak believers be encouraged to persevere hopefully in well-doing; for they shall have success, if they lay hold on the strength of God. On the other hand, no one, who does not strive to be holy, has any scriptural evidence of his election, nor can he possibly have it while he lives in ungodliness and spiritual indifference. If one desires to obtain pardon and an experience of God's favour, he must repent, forsake his evil ways, and turn to God, who "will have mercy on" him, "and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon;" but he will not forgive him who cleaves to his sins. For professors of religion, the matter is not so much, when, where, or how they were converted, as many suppose, but whether they prove that they love God, by a holy obedience to his will.

DISCOURSE IV.

PREDESTINATION.

Eph. i. 5, 6: "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved."

THOUGH election and predestination are abused by some, and opposed by others, yet when spiritually apprehended, the knowledge of them is fitted to promote the sanctification of believers. The contemplation of them excited the apostle's warmest feelings of gratitude so that he joyfully exclaimed:—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved."

Here we have the Divine act of predestination, the privilege to which we are predestinated, the medium whereby we obtain it, the cause of our predestination, and the ends for which we are predestinated.

I. Notice the Divine act of predestination.
“Having predestinated us.”

1. Observe that election and predestination are closely connected.

Some may suppose that the apostle meant to express the one great act of God's love to his people by the two words “chosen” and “predestinated,” but though in the Scriptures, particularly in Paul's epistles, we find one idea expressed by several words that are nearly synonymous, yet there is a shade of difference between them, and thus the meaning of the thing described is more fully set forth. At all events, in this case, the Holy Ghost was pleased to express God's eternal purpose of love by the two words, “election,” and “predestination,” or foreordination, as it is sometimes called. We therefore conclude that the two terms convey to our minds God's design with regard to his people with greater fulness than one of them would do.

2. We observe then that “election” and “predestination” differ in some respects.

Some interpreters say that election is an act of God's will, and predestination an act of his understanding, a matter of deliberation. “Being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” Eph. i. 11. “For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.” Acts iv. 28. That distinction may

be true, but the idea in this passage seems rather to be this :—Election is a choosing of persons from all others, and it gives them a federal connection with Christ as their common Head or root from which they spring ; it gives them, in God's mind, a being in Christ as their representative ; and then predestination is a second act whereby they are ordained to adoption and eternal glory. They are predestinated "unto the adoption of children," which is a high dignity that involves a title to the most valuable privileges. "As many as received him, to them gave he power," that is, right, "to become the sons of God." John i. 12. Election put them in Christ, and predestination settled great privileges upon them. God first chose them in Christ, and then he determined to bless them through Christ. "Of him," that is, God, "are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." 1 Cor. i. 30. God gave this world to the sons of men by a charter to Adam, and if we suppose a man to have existed before he was born, he had no title to anything in this world until connected with Adam by union to a body descended from him. In like manner one must have a connection with Christ federally in order to be predestinated to the "adoption of sons;" and he must be connected with him spiritually in order to receive the blessings of that position actually. In election God did not regard Christ as Head of the Church as separate from it, nor the Church as separate

from him the Head ; but chose him and the Church in one act, and chose the Church to holiness as a consequence of election in Christ, that her communion with him would be possible ; for without "holiness . . . no man shall see the Lord." Heb. xii. 14. As without reason no one can become a scholar, so without perfect moral purity no one can enter heaven. Before we can have permanent fellowship with God we must be like him in character.

II. But we notice the rank and privileges to which the people of God are predestinated. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children."

I. Observe that sonship is peradded to our federal union to Christ.

Adoption gives a right to the inheritance of the saints, also to the favour, protection, and fellowship of God, both in this world and eternally in heaven. The apostle says of the matter : "We ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Rom. viii. 23. Believers groan until they are brought to heaven, nor shall their glory and happiness be complete until their bodies shall be raised from the dead in a state suitable to be the eternal habitation of their souls. Then their redemption shall be complete, and the adoption shall be realized in the fulness of its blessedness. To this, and to

all the glory that shall follow, believers are foreordained. Adoption and glory are joined in the Scriptures, so that those who are predestinated to the one are predestinated to the other: "To whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory." Rom. ix. 4. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! . . . And it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." 1 John iii. 1, 2. Adoption is the dignity of a Christian in this life, and fulness of glory in heaven. In his intercessory prayer, Christ says concerning his people: "Father, . . . the glory which thou gavest me I have given them. . . . I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." John xvii. 21-24.

2. Observe that election secures holiness; and predestination, adoption, with all its dignities, privileges, and glory.

Holiness must result from the choosing of believers to union to Christ; for it would be incongruous that the Head should be pure, and the members of the body corrupt. The union of two who should be contrary in character, tastes, and inclinations could not be a blessing to either, but constant misery. God therefore chose his people to be holy as he is holy, and moreover predestinated them to glory. To save from all

the evil of sin would be great favour, but to foreordain to everlasting glory crowns it with perfection. "Being made free from sin, and become servants to God," is a great blessing, and secures "fruit unto holiness"; but there is more than that secured; for God foreordained that, to all chosen to be thus made free, "the end" shall be "everlasting life." Rom. vi. 22.

The people of God should endeavour to realize what is included in their adoption: there is given to them a right to all privileges, not only in this world, but also in the world to come. They know not themselves the fulness of the blessings to which they have a right. Inasmuch as God is their Father, all his wealth, in love, mercy, compassion, wisdom, power, and faithfulness, is theirs. "The LORD is the portion of" their "inheritance and of" their "cup," and he maintains their "lot. The lines are fallen unto" them "in pleasant places; yea," they "have a goodly heritage." Ps. xvi. 5, 6. They have permission to go to their Father with regard to all troubles. In a word, "all things are" theirs.

III. Notice the medium through which the blessing of predestination to adoption is obtained. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ."

1. The Son of God was appointed to the mediatorial office with a view to the adoption of his people.

In election God put his people in Jesus Christ, who is his own Son by nature. He chose them in him to be united to him in the closest bonds. By their betrothal to his eternal Son, he constituted them his own children. This is a nearer relationship to the Father and the Son than ordinary adoption among men; for it is a covenant union, called in Scripture a betrothal or marriage, which in due time is actually realized, and then becomes a living union. Nothing exactly like it can be done among men; for God communicates his own life through Christ by his Spirit unto all those, who, when regenerated are enabled to rest on Christ by faith. Then they are really adopted by an act of God's free grace, and the predestinating purpose of adoption is actually fulfilled to them. The matter was settled in the mind of God when he chose them in Christ, and entered into covenant with him with regard to them.

2. We observe that, having forfeited their right to every blessing, Christ was appointed to purchase it for them.

Though not adopted on account of the merits of Christ, but on the ground of union to him in election, yet they could not be actually adopted in time if Christ had not redeemed them from wrath by his blood. "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that are under the law, that we might

receive the adoption of sons." Gal. iv. 4, 5. Seeing their sin was an obstacle to the bestowal of adoption upon them, he, by his merits, removed every legal hindrance, and, by his Spirit, he removes every moral hindrance, so that they are actually constituted God's first-born, or heirs, and joint heirs with Christ.

IV. Notice the moving cause of predestination.

"Having predestinated us . . . according to the good pleasure of his will."

Before anything was created God knew all things that he could make ; but he was under no necessity to make any of them ; for he is "God blessed for ever," and would be so if he created nothing. Though, by his works, his glory is displayed, yet he would be infinitely glorious without them, and supremely satisfied with himself. That he, therefore, purposed to bring worlds and living creatures into existence was a decision of his will ; for nothing else could move him to exert his creating power, because all his works can add no glory or blessedness to him. "Bless the LORD your God for ever and ever ; and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise." Neh. ix. 5. Our blessing and praise cannot benefit him. "O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord : my goodness extendeth not to thee." Ps. xvi. 2.

When God contemplated men in a fallen state and bound in justice to suffer the punishment due unto their

sins, he might, without any loss or injury to himself, leave them to perish for ever ; for he was under no obligation, either to himself or to them, to provide a redemption for them. This John Wesley called "a bold and precarious statement," but it would be much bolder to say that he was bound to do this. His will decided the matter, nor is it attributed to his bare will merely, as is the case with regard to his purpose concerning his other works, but to "*the good pleasure* of his will." The qualifying words, "good pleasure," are not in Scripture connected with "will" in any Divine decree but that of the election and predestination of men unto salvation and eternal glory. In the expression, "he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," we have simply will and no more ; but when the predestination and salvation of sinners by Christ are referred to, they are ascribed to "*the good pleasure* of his will." It is true that God purposed nothing but what it pleased him to purpose. "Our God is in the heavens : he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased." Ps. cxv. 3. "Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in the earth, in the seas, and all deep places." Ps. cxxxv. 6. "Thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee." Jonah i. 14. These and similar passages simply express God's decision to act in certain ways because it was just, wise, and holy to do so ; but he purposed with delight to save his people ; and, therefore, he is said to predestinate

them, not merely according to the "pleasure of his will," but "according to the *good* pleasure of his will." We learn from the words that he has formed no purpose, nor performed any act with regard to his creatures, with such pleasure as that of predestinating his people to adoption and glory. God set such a value upon the salvation of those whom he had chosen in Christ, that he resolved to exert all needed power to save them. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should have everlasting life." John iii. 16. It is true that he punishes the wicked, but this he does as the righteous Judge, not "with good pleasure," but with regret, for though he pities his creatures, he must act justly. "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the LORD God; and not that he should turn from his ways and live?" Ez. xviii. 23. "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the LORD God." Ez. xviii. 32. "Say unto them, As I live, saith the LORD God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Ez. xxxiii. 11.

V. Notice the ends for which God predestinated his people. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself . . . to the praise of the glory of his grace."

1. He predestinated them unto adoption "to himself."

God chose his people for himself. "Know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself." Ps. iv. 3. He chose him out of the rest to be his own intimate friend. God distinguished David, not only by exalting him to royal dignity, but much more highly, by exalting him to cordial friendship. Being a man after God's heart, notwithstanding infirmities, there was mutual affection between them. God honoureth all his people in the same way; he chose them from among men to be made kings and priests, between whom and himself he establishes concord, mutual love, and confidence. He calls them "my chosen" whom I have "formed for myself." Isa. xliii. 20, 21. He formed them for himself first in their election; again, in their regeneration; but, as the second forming 'aves them imperfect, there is a final forming when they shall be made perfect by the redemption of their body and their glorification in heaven. God will be so satisfied with them that "he will rejoice over" them "with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over" them "with singing." Zeph. iii. 17.

Whether the text means it or not, it is also true that God predestinated his people unto adoption for Christ, so that his mystical body should be complete. In this respect they are the fulness of Christ. As man, it was proper that he should not be alone; God there-

fore chose and predestinated many brethren to be his associates and joint-heirs with him.

2. God predestinated them unto adoption to the praise of the glory of his grace.

By the adoption of sinners into the family of God, the glory of his grace is made conspicuous, so that intelligent creatures behold and praise it. Without this act, grace would remain hid in God. Though he derives no benefit from our praises, he delights in them, because they promote our happiness, and he is pleased to see us full of holy joy.

3. Observe that we have all these blessings "in the Beloved." As Christ is the beloved of the Father, what are our feelings with regard to him? If we love him, we shall enjoy his favour for ever; but if not, let us consider the apostle's solemn declaration, "if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha."

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DISCOURSE V.

REDEMPTION.

Eph. i. 7, 8: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence."

THE apostle in this chapter refers to two classes of blessings which God confers upon his people. First, holiness, adoption, and acceptance, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love;" "having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself," "to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved." Secondly, redemption, justification, and effectual calling, "In whom we have redemption through his blood;" "in whom we have . . . the forgiveness of sins;" "having made known to us the mystery of his will." The first class of blessings is the highest, and realized by God's people by means of the second class. God elected his people to holiness and eternal glory, he predestinated them to be his sons, and accepted their persons. All these blessings were assigned to them in Christ; for they were

regarded as members of his mystical body. As it was foreseen that they would forfeit their title to these high privileges by sinning against God, he decreed that they would be redeemed by Christ, that the redemption would be applied to them, that their persons would be justified, and that, in order to justification, they would be called effectually by the Holy Ghost. All these blessings, the second as well as the first class, are bestowed in Christ; chosen "in him," adopted in "Jesus Christ," accepted "in the Beloved." "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence."

All these blessings may be expressed by the terms: election, redemption, and effectual calling.

1. Notice the blessings chiefly referred to in these two verses.

God, in his unerring wisdom, his unspotted purity, and in his absolute rectitude, purposed to permit the fall of man, wherein his chosen, predestinated, and accepted people were involved and became liable to everlasting exclusion from his favour; but from eternity he purposed to restore them to the high privilege of everlasting blessedness by having their right to it purchased, and themselves redeemed from all the evils to which they became justly liable. The title to eternal happiness, which is purchased for them, is in due time

conferred upon them, so that the glory of heaven is suitably called redemption. When Christ told his disciples of the signs immediately preceding his second coming, he said: "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." Luke xxi. 28. Then the bodies of the saints shall be raised, their souls and bodies shall be united, and they shall be for ever with the Lord in endless blessedness. The apostle says that believers groan while in this life, "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of" their "body." Rom. viii. 23. Sanctification is redemption from the power of sin working in the members. It is said that Christ "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Titus ii. 14. Redemption comprises the purchase of a title to eternal glory, freedom from condemnation, deliverance from wrath, and salvation from sin and its consequences.

II. Notice the Redeemer. "In whom we have redemption."

This is Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, who is the Father's equal in all Divine perfections. It is he who was set forth by Solomon by the title of Wisdom dwelling with God from everlasting. "The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the

beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth. . . . When he gave to the sea his decree, that the water should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by him as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men." Prov. viii. 22-31. He is the angel who was with the church in the wilderness. It was he who spake to Moses from the burning bush, whose voice, proclaimed from Mount Sinai, all the people heard, saying: "I am Jehovah thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Ex. xx. 2. He is declared to be God's fellow. "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts." Zech. xiii. 7. He is Jehovah whom Jehovah sent to his people. "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith Jehovah. And many nations shall be joined to Jehovah in that day, and shall be my people; and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that Jehovah of hosts hath sent me unto thee." Zech. ij. 10, 11. He is the Word that was in the beginning, "was with God, and . . . was God." John i. 1.

This Divine person was appointed our Redeemer with his own full consent, and that he might discharge the duty that he undertook, it was agreed that everything necessary to the successful accomplishment of his undertaking should be provided for him. He engaged to redeem the people given to him by his Father, and the Father engaged to prepare a human nature for him, anoint him with the Holy Ghost, and sustain him while carrying out the work of redemption. "Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me." Heb. x. 5. "Behold my servant, whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth, I have put my spirit upon him. . . . He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth." Isa. xlii. 3, 4. When he and the Father entered into a covenant with regard to our redemption, he agreed to take our nature into personal union with himself, and to assume our responsibilities to obey the law and suffer for our sins, on condition of obtaining for us everlasting glory, perfect holiness, sonship, redemption, regeneration, faith, justification, pardon, and deliverance from the pollution of sin, together with his own exaltation, as our Mediatorial Head, to supreme power over all things. As he performed all that he undertook, the Father performed to him all the stipulated promises; for he who was "in the form of God," and "thought it not robbery to be equal with God, "because he made

himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men : and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." Phil. ii. 6-9. The Father "raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come ; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body." Eph. i. 20-23.

III. Notice the redeemed. "In whom *we* have redemption."

1. Observe the significance of the pronoun "*we*" in this place.

The apostle by "*we*" meant himself and the saints which were "at Ephesus, and the faithful in Christ Jesus." The passage refers to believers in every place and all ages, whom "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, . . . hath blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ : according as he hath chosen" them "in him before the foundation of the world, that" they "may be holy and without blame before him in love : having

predestinated" them "unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made" them "accepted in the Beloved." These then are the persons who have redemption through the blood of Christ.

2. Observe also that the apostle says: "*We have redemption.*"

The saints under the old dispensation could not say "*we have redemption,*" as New Testament believers can. Christ obtained credit with the Father, on the ground of which believers of that period were saved. They saw the day of Christ afar off, but the price of their redemption was not actually paid in their day. He was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" only in covenant and type, but he had not really suffered and died until he was crucified on Calvary. They had been saved, but Christ had not yet actually paid any of their indebtedness. New Testament saints are differently situated; for in their case the debt is paid, and their legal obligations are cancelled. "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." Heb. ii. 9. "Christ . . . offered himself without spot to God. . . . And for this cause he is the Mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the

redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." Heb. ix. 14, 15. When he came into the world and died, he settled by his obedience and death, for all already saved on his credit, and paid in advance for all the rest of those chosen to holiness and predestinated unto adoption. To know that the debt is paid is a great help to the faith of New Testament believers ; for we see Jesus crucified, dying, rising again from the dead, ascending to heaven, and there "crowned with glory and honour."

3. Observe that "we have" this redemption in Christ. "In *whom* we have redemption."

Christ, like Adam, is a representative person : as we were condemned in Adam when he sinned, his people were all justified in Christ when he paid their indebtedness ; but the deed of justification is not actually put into their hands until by faith in him they agree to accept it ; until that is done no man can claim a discharge from his liability to punishment.

IV. Notice the means whereby the redemption is received. "We have redemption *through his blood*."

When God transacted with Christ about the salvation of those given to him, he demanded a just price for their redemption ; seeing this was agreed to, in due

time the amount was paid in full. On this account it is said: "Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." 1 Cor. vi. 20. Christ "gave himself a ransom for all." 1 Tim. ii. 6. The ransom, or price of our redemption, is in the text called his blood, not because his obedience formed no part of it, but because his work culminated in the shedding of his blood. In the Old Testament it is said that the blood is the life of a creature, so is the blood of Christ the life of his obedience and sufferings. Under the typical dispensation "almost all things" were "purged with blood; and without shedding of blood" was "no remission." Heb. ix. 22. The blood of Christ was shed for the covering of sin; and so lively does this truth affect the minds of saints in glory that they exclaim: "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." Rev. v. 9.

V. Notice the blessing conferred on believers as the fruit of redemption. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, *the forgiveness of sins.*"

This is an important matter, for it lies at the foundation of our experience of all gospel blessings. When a poor sinner is convinced of his sin, guilt, and condemnation to punishment, he can have neither

rest nor comfort until his sins be forgiven him, nor can peace be satisfactorily found until he comes to Christ for it. Many things promise relief from a condemning conscience, which, if they give ease, it is only a delusion; for sooner or later, when conscience will discover the deception, it will denounce the sinner with greater vigour than before. Without forgiveness there can be no communion with God, no experience of "consolation in Christ," no "comfort of love," no "fellowship of the Spirit," nor any solid hope of heaven. There may be some pleasurable emotions, but they produce no sanctifying effects. When a man's sins are pardoned, other spiritual blessings will follow. If any one asks what sins are forgiven, the Scriptures reply: all sins. "And you, being dead in your sins and uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses." Col. ii. 13.

VI. Notice the source of redemption. "We have redemption . . . according to *the riches of his grace.*"

Grace means God's good will in conferring any favour on us. "He hath justified us freely by his grace." Rom. iii. 24. The love and mercy of God are grace, because he freely, or of his own good will, exercises them with regard to his creatures. God's grace is not of any necessity of his nature, or from any obligation to us, but a matter of Divine freedom. "He

hath mercy on whom he will have mercy." Rom. ix. 18. It is said that he blessed his people "with all spiritual blessings," chosen, adopted, and accepted them "to the praise of the glory of his grace," and forgiveth them "according to the riches of his grace."

1. Observe then that it was grace that appointed Christ to the mediatorial office to render satisfaction for his people, that thus he should redeem them. Divine justice demanded satisfaction, for without it pardon was impossible. Grace called Christ to meet the demands that were made. It was not justice but grace that suggested this arrangement, and urged Christ to discharge for us our heavy obligations.

2. As God was not bound to accept a substitute for sinners, that he did so was a matter of grace. He might insist upon the punishment of the guilty in their own person, for that would be strictly just, holy, and good. He might say to Christ: I grant the infinite value of thy merits, but I am at liberty to accept thine offer or not. Such however is God's grace that he gave his own Son to offer himself a sacrifice for us.

3. When satisfaction was made, and redemption purchased, God was under no obligation to apply it to any one, nor even to accept the offer of the Spirit to do so. Grace, however, moved the Holy Ghost to undertake the work of renewing sinners, and of persuading them to accept Jesus Christ and his redemption. Grace acted with equal power in the minds of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

4. To comfort believers, the grace of God is said to be so rich that it abounds "toward them in all wisdom and prudence." If their sins are many and their guilt great, grace is greater. If our folly and ignorance are great, his wisdom and prudence, which he abundantly imparts to his people, are infinite.

Sinners, God, who offers this rich grace to you, in proof of his good faith, proclaims it to you in the gospel, and urges it upon your acceptance by his servants ; besides this, the Spirit in many cases presses it forcibly upon your attention. If you then come short of the grace of God it is because you will not accept redemption from the guilt and dominion of sin. If you, through the love of sin, refuse salvation you shall inevitably perish. Considering your perilous position, pray to God to give you repentance unto life that you may turn to him with true contrition.

DISCOURSE VI.

THE MYSTERY OF THE GATHERING TOGETHER INTO ONE
OF ALL THINGS IN CHRIST.

Eph. i. 9, 10: • Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.

IN these verses the apostle continues the enumeration of the blessings that God purposed to bestow upon his people: from everlasting, he had chosen, predestinated and accepted them in Christ; in time, he redeemed them by his Son, and on the ground of the ransom paid by him, he regenerates, pardons, justifies, adopts, sanctifies, and glorifies them. "He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to the good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in him."

1. Notice the character of God's purpose with regard to this great gathering together. It is a mystery.

1. It is a mystery, because none but God fully understands it.

The purpose of convening this glorious congress was hid in God's mind until he saw proper to reveal it; first, obscurely and gradually; afterwards, with greater clearness; but notwithstanding the brightness of the revelation of it in the Gospel, there is much in it that, to us, is mysterious. "We speak," said the apostle, "the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory." 1 Cor. ii. 7. There never was a greater secret than the Gospel; for the highest intelligence in creation could not discover that the salvation of fallen men was possible until God revealed it, and even when revealed, no man can understand the method of it, so as to accept it, until his mind is enlightened by the Holy Ghost. The great secret of redemption and of the august gathering of the saints was hid in God's mind, nor would it ever be known if he had not revealed it, and had he not given power of apprehending it to men. As a subordinate agent in the work of making it known, the apostle says that God bestowed the great favour on him of being appointed to "preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God." Eph. iii. 8, 9. All the wise men of the world could not discover it. "None of the

princes of this world knew" it, "for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory:" for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." 1 Cor. ii. 8, 9. Profound politicians, who understand the principles of civil government, who have keen discernment in discovering the secret purposes of cabinets, and who have inventive genius to counteract the schemes of their opponents, cannot understand the mystery of the gospel without Divine illumination.

Old Testament saints, and even prophets, had but dark ideas of the glory of the gospel; for they "searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto" us; "searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." 1 Peter i. 10, 11. They wrote as they were inspired by the Holy Ghost, but they did not clearly understand their own predictions. They were given to know that they ministered to the edification of future generations, but the manner of the display of the coming glory they did not comprehend.

This mystery was hidden from angels; for, though they were near God as faithful servants and ministers, they did not know his mind concerning this matter.

Indeed the Church knew it before angels did, for it is by the Church it is made known to them. "From the beginning of the world" it "hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." Eph. iii. 9, 10. From this it seems that they learn the gospel from the Church, and that in Christian assemblies, where the gospel is preached, there is a large concourse of angels present to hear the mystery unfolded, in order that their desire to know more of the wisdom of God may be gratified; for we are told that they "desire to look into these things."

2. This is a mystery because it is a product of God's will.

In purposing redemption and the glorious gathering of the saints God did not consult any one but himself; because none of his creatures, however high in intelligence, could give him the least aid in the matter, as the best of them had not sufficient capacity for the solution of so great a problem. The whole plan must be traced back to the divine will as the adequate cause. "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." Rom. ix. 15, 16. Suppose that a sinful man knew all that God himself knows except his

purpose to save sinners and the plan that he devised for this end, it would not in the least benefit him ; for such extensive knowledge would increase his misery, as it would make him like the devils. The knowledge of this mystery is unspeakably more valuable than that of everything else. To know that God in his goodness will have mercy on sinners is worth more than all the world. To have true comfort we need to know that it is God's will to save us by living faith in Christ. When an awakened sinner realizes his own lost state, and is assured that it is God's good pleasure to save such as he is for the sake of his own Son, he is enabled to be satisfied with God's good will in the matter and with the ransom paid by Christ. Thus, he is enabled to rest on Christ and to surrender himself to God to be dealt with as he sees proper. Such a one is then enabled to know in some measure the mystery of God's will with regard to himself. Suppose that one of Solomon's courtiers, who had been the king's companion in his studies, committed some treasonable acts, and discovered that his treason was reported to his master, he would be so agitated with fear that, notwithstanding his knowledge of the king's views on so many subjects, his anxiety for his life would not be removed until the justly incensed monarch should intimate to him that it was his will to pardon and reinstate him in his favour. He might before that have heard rumours that such was the

king's purpose, but the mystery would be too dark to relieve his mind until he should be assured of his sovereign's clemency ; and even then he might not be able to account for the motives that caused him to show mercy : there would still be considerable mystery connected with the king's conduct.' If the case is so with regard to the acts of men, how much more with regard to God's act.

II. Notice the great work that God purposed to accomplish. "He hath purposed in himself : that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth ; even in him."

1. Observe that the residence of those whom God purposed to gather together in one are heaven and earth.

The intelligent inhabitants of these two places are angels and men, and it is to be observed that there is a third region to which no reference is made in this enumeration, hell, the habitation of devils and lost souls. The solemn omission excludes them from this glorious assembly ; their names are not written in the book of life. In this distinguished congress there shall be all the ransomed and the holy angels of every rank, "principalities, and powers, and mights, and dominions in the heavenly places," and men of all nations, ages, and

positions. It is God's will that men of all stations in this life should "be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth," and we are therefore exhorted to make "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings for all men, for kings, and for all that are in authority." 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2, 4.

2. The time when God purposed that this gathering together should openly commence.

It is called "the dispensation of the fulness of times." There were some gathered before, but it was when Christ came, died, and ascended into heaven that the mystery began to be clearly unfolded. Christ came into the world for this purpose when four thousand years had passed away. When the time appointed by God for the old state of things had run out, a new era commenced wherein God purposed to work in a different way. Up to that time the field where the gathering was carried on had been small; the Gospel in its old dispensation was confined to one people, for the Church was in its infancy. The time had arrived when the children of God should obtain the liberty of their majority. When, therefore, "the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Gal. iv. 4, 5. The Jews had the true religion exclusively for generations, but after the resurrection of Christ it was extended to the Gentiles, and it soon

passed over to them to the exclusion of the Jews for a period. There is, however, an era appointed by God when his ancient people shall be gathered again into the Church. When these various periods come to an end, the events settled in God's purpose shall take place. Christ came when the world was ripe, because the condition of Jews and Gentiles was ready for the change that was to be introduced. Though we cannot clearly see all the reasons for it, it was a fit season for Christ's advent. Had he come earlier, all the ends would not be accomplished, and if his coming had been longer postponed, loss would be sustained. In devising and carrying out his plans, God commits no mistakes. It was the right time for the granting of liberty to the Jews from ceremonial restraints, and the Gentiles began to be ripe for the harvest. It is true that it was the early ripening, but the ingathering has gone on since, and there are now indications of the speedy coming of the time wherein all nations shall be gathered to Christ, and the Jewish field which has lain fallow for eighteen hundred years shall be cultivated, that it may yield a rich harvest for the honour of Christ, and to the joy of the Gentiles.

3. But observe that a dispersion is implied in this Divine purpose of gathering together.

Sin caused a serious separation: first, between God and his sinful creatures; and, secondly, between rebel and holy angels, between holy angels and men,

and to such extent among men themselves that this world has been a wild scene of enmity, strife, and confusion. Up to this time the earth has been the theatre of animosities, oppression, war, and bloodshed. Kingdoms are always suspicious of each other, so that in times of peace they are prepared for hostilities, nor can we see that mutual confidence prevails to any extent among them. Though the Jews, on account of their dispersion, are not able to wage war, their hatred to the Gentiles, particularly to Christians, is intensely bitter. They curse Christ to-day with as much venom as they did in Pilate's judgment hall, when the excited mob cried: "Away with him, away with him, crucify him, crucify him." All this enmity between man and God, between holy angels and men, between tribes, nations, and kingdoms, and between Jews and Gentiles, was virtually destroyed on the cross of Christ, and it shall be actually destroyed in God's time by the Gospel through the power of God. Men are by nature enemies to God, who though he is merciful and gracious, yet, as the righteous Judge, he has pronounced a sentence of eternal death on all sinners. As there is a sad disruption of friendship between God and men, holy angels, in their loyalty, have declared for their Sovereign Lord against the rebels. God, however, purposed to remove this hostility between his people and himself, and to establish friendship between them and angels, and also among themselves. Along with

all other graces, he fills their hearts with love to himself, and to each other. The time for reconciliation in this world is fixed in God's counsel of peace. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Isa. ii. 2-4.

4. Observe that the Person in whom they are gathered together is the Lord Jesus Christ, who made peace between God and men, between men and angels, between Jews and Gentiles, and between all men. "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." Col. i. 19, 20. This great reconciliation having been accomplished by Christ, they shall be all gathered together in him as unto a Head.

That he might gather them together, and be a suitable Head to them, he took unto him, in personal union, the nature of man. He took a nature wherein that of men and angels may be regarded as combined; for the human soul which he took to himself is a spirit which, though not strictly speaking angelic, is similar to angels, and the body that he took is material, so that in his person there is the Divine, the created spirit, and the physical body. In him these three great elements meet, that men and angels should be closely and firmly united to him, and through him to God. To secure this grand union he submitted to a temporary separation from God and men. All his disciples forsook him in the hour of his peril, and when he was on the cross the Father hid his face from him, which caused him to cry: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" By virtue of this awful separation we are reconciled. His incarnation was the summing of all in his Person, his death was a short separation, and his resurrection was virtually a gathering of all in him, and an assurance that all intended to fill up his mystical body shall be actually united to him.

5. Observe that there was a necessity for this gathering together, not only for fallen men, but also for holy angels, for though the latter were in friendship with God there was no absolute certainty that they would not fall as other angels had already done; for God "putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens

are not clean in his sight." Job xv. 15. To make them secure, God gave them to his Son to be united to him as their Head, as well as the Head of saved men, though in a different way. Because then he is, by Divine appointment, the Head of both, in him they stand.

We should appreciate the gospel that reveals this profound mystery, and that our knowledge of it may increase to our growth in holiness, we should, in dependence on the Holy Spirit, prayerfully study the Word of God wherein he has been pleased to make his will known concerning the salvation of men, and the gathering together in one of "all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are in earth; even in him." If truly desirous of knowing the mind of God concerning this matter, we will submit ourselves to his instructions with an honest desire to follow his directions. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." John vii. 17. No one who has the Scriptures has a right to excuse his ignorance of the way of salvation, for all who sincerely endeavour to obey God shall be enlightened in the knowledge of Christ. It is therefore our part to avail ourselves diligently of all the means of growth in spiritual knowledge that God has graciously placed within our reach, looking to him for the exercise of his power to make them effectual unto our salvation.

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DISCOURSE VII.

THE INHERITANCE.

Eph. i. 11-13: "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation."

HAVING stated the blessings which God had purposed to bestow on his people, the apostle proceeds to make a practical application of the great doctrines set forth. In his eternal counsels God chose them in Christ to holiness, he predestinated them to adoption by Jesus Christ, "in whom" they "have redemption through his blood," and he purposed to "gather together in one all things in Christ," "in whom also," says he, "we have obtained an inheritance . . . who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also" obtained the same inheritance.

I. Notice the inheritance of the saints.

1. Observe that it is a rich inheritance.

A man to whom an estate worth millions of money is left, by his father or some other relative, is considered wealthy, so that friends congratulate and pay him

court ; but in comparison with the heirs of God, he is poor ; for believers inherit all things. "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are " theirs. 1 Cor. iii. 22. Being "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," therefore, all that God is, and possesses, are theirs. It is characteristic of those that they regard God himself as their chief property, for each of them says : "The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places ; yea, I have a goodly heritage." Ps. xvi. 5, 6.

2. Observe then that this inheritance is inexhaustible, being infinite in value and amount.

God's wealth, as it is displayed in nature, shows his resources to be boundless. Light and heat have been communicated to the earth for thousands of years, nor does it appear that these influences, so necessary to the life of plants, animals, and men, are in the least diminished. The earth has been for ages yielding sustenance to the various creatures living thereon, nor is its power of producing support to them appreciably less than at any former time ; though possibly the number nourished thereby was never greater than at present. Since the first mist arose "from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground," there has been no poverty of rain to refresh the fields, and the treasury is as full to-day as it was when the first shower fell. It

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is true that God distributes it as he pleases, when, where, and how it seems good to himself, for he does not, like us, require to practise economy lest the store should give out. If the treasures of his bounty in the natural world are so great, much more so are those of his grace. His compassion is boundless, his mercy is unlimited, his love is unfathomable, and his generosity is inexhaustible. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John iii. 16. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. viii. 32.

3. It is an inalienable inheritance.

In this world parents may bequeath large estates to their children, but through various causes their patrimony may pass away from them in a few years, so that such heirs, from a state of affluence, may fall into poverty. To prevent such a result, many, in the exercise of what they consider wise foresight, entail their property so that it cannot be lost; but it may become so encumbered that the owner may be really poor; and in every case, each successive proprietor must leave it behind him, when he goes out of this life into another world where he can bring no part of it with him, and if he does not lay up treasure in heaven, he will be absolutely poor through eternity. Not so, however, the heirs of God, for they have an everlasting

inheritance, which is "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for" them, and they "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." 1 Peter i. 4, 5. Their title cannot be forfeited, for it is confirmed by an everlasting covenant with their Head, who amply fulfilled its conditions to the satisfaction of God the Father; so that, in the midst of anxious misgivings, each of them may say: "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. The endless possession which is promised them, God will faithfully bestow upon them. "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." John x. 28, 29.

II. Notice the heirs. "We have obtained an inheritance, . . . who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also" obtained the same.

1. The apostle and other believing Jews obtained the heavenly inheritance.

These have the distinguished honour of having it recorded of them that they "first trusted in Christ." Some of the apostles had the privilege of being first called by Christ, and of trusting in him before others, so that they are the first fruits of this New Testament

Church. For these to whom Christ preached first, he specially prayed before his last sufferings. "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me. . . . I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. . . . And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which believe on me through their word." John xvii. 9-20. Though, as was natural, his human affections embraced his companions, yet he remembered all his future disciples. To believe in Christ before others is represented by the apostle as an advantage. He says that the Gospel "is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Rom. i. 16. On one occasion, as Peter preached in the temple to a congregation of Jews, he said: "Unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Acts iii. 26. In one of Christ's interviews with his disciples after his resurrection, he taught them "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Luke xxiv. 47. He informed them that the Gospel should be preached first to the Jews. It was Paul's practice, when he came to a city or country, to make Christ known to the Jews first, if

there were any there. Christ had a peculiar regard for them, and it was reasonable that he should, seeing that he was of them according to the flesh; and though ascended into heaven, we are not entitled to think that he has lost his affection for his kinsmen. It is distinctly stated that, though unbelieving, "they are beloved for the fathers' sakes." Rom. xi. 28. We are at present, however, considering the privilege of being first in Christ; for it may well be valued by those who are so distinguished in a family, neighbourhood, or country, and certainly those who believe after them should treat them with considerate respect. To see a convert of a few weeks, or even a few years, pert and opinionative before an old believer, is, to say the least, not very seemly. Such conduct plainly indicates lack of modesty, if not a more serious defect. Paul mentions to the honour of Andronicus and Junia, his "kinsmen, and . . . fellow prisoners," that they "were in Christ before" him, and also of Epænetus, that he was "the first fruits of Achaia unto Christ." When a person, whether young or old, is the first that is spiritually enlightened in a family, and believes savingly in Christ, he is the first fruit in the family. When one is thus become holy to God, the family becomes holy. "For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy." Rom. xi. 16. In the first converts to the Gospel in Hindostan, China, and Africa, these nations are consecrated to Christ. In this way the Mediator asserts

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his universal sovereignty, by taking enfeoffment in his property, as the old law term says, as a pledge of taking full possession of it in due time.

2. Gentiles also obtained the inheritance. "In whom ye also trusted."

The word "trusted" is printed in italics, because there is no word corresponding to it in the original, and though it makes good sense, it seems that we should rather understand, in whom ye also obtained an inheritance and trusted. The two things may be understood; for all that the apostle says of the Jews, except the priority of trusting in Christ, he says also of the Gentiles. The Ephesians trusted in Christ, though later than the apostles and other Jews; but like them the Ephesians were chosen in Christ to be holy, predestinated to the adoption of children, redeemed, called, united to Christ, justified, and to obtain the inheritance. The same ransom was paid for them, they were saved by the same faith, they had the same Father and Saviour, they were members of the same family, and became entitled to the same privileges.

III. Notice the Person in whose right believers obtain the inheritance. "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance."

1. Observe that the person meant is Christ, who, as Mediator was appointed heir of all things.

As Mediator, God man, the Son of God was "made so much better than the angels, as he by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." Heb. i. 4. He obtained universal sovereignty, and "all the angels of God" were commanded to "worship him," and unto him the Father said, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy Kingdom." Heb. i. 6, 7. Though he is, like the Father, the Creator, Lord, and proprietor of all things, yet in his representative character as Head of the Church, a title to the inheritance of the saints was given to him on behalf of his people. When he was chosen to be their Saviour they were chosen in him; for unless they had been elected in him his appointment would have no meaning. God knew the whole object of the transaction, because it was planned by his own unerring wisdom. As it is necessary that the heirs should be fitted for the enjoyment of the inheritance, God elected them to "be holy and without blame before him in love," and that their title should be on a solid foundation, he predestinated them to the adoption of children. In this grand transaction between the Father and the Son, their right to the inheritance was settled in the Divine purpose and covenant of redemption, but the title is not put into their hand until after they believe; they are constituted heirs of God by adoption when their persons are justified.

2. Observe, therefore, that in order to obtain the inheritance actually, they are spiritually united to Christ.

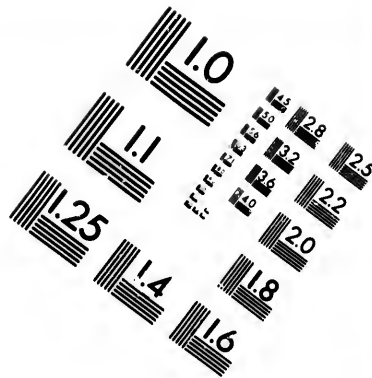
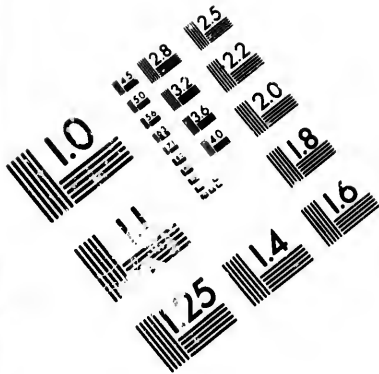
God, "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," at the time purposed by himself, renews them by his Spirit, so that they rest on Christ by faith. They are then vitally united to him so as to become heirs of God in Christ's right.

IV. Notice the reason of their obtaining the inheritance. "We have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

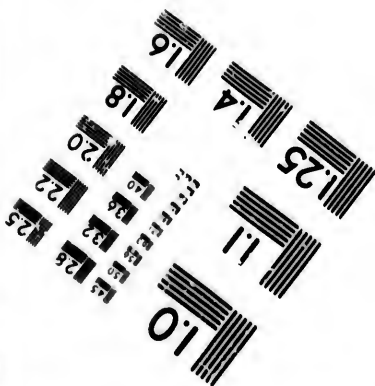
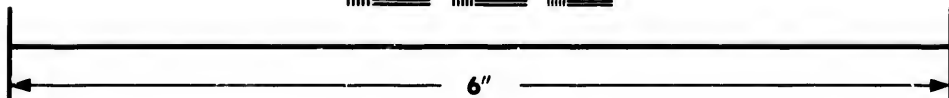
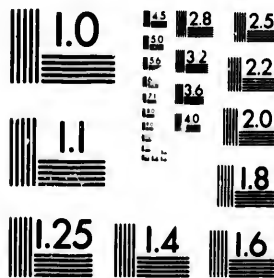
1. Observe that an inheritance is not purchased by the heir.

Though one, by industry, skill, and prudence, should increase the capital whereby his father started him in life, so as to enable him to buy a valuable property, he could not say that he inherited it any more than he who, without such aid, might accomplish the same end; for in both cases it would be simply a purchased estate, but not an inheritance. Many, under a mistaken notion, think that they can purchase the heavenly inheritance either wholly or in part; but if this could be done it would not be called an inheritance but a property acquired by paying its value for it. God, in the eternal covenant, entailed the inheritance on his chosen people, but as they forfeited their title to it by





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sin, Christ paid a ransom for them to redeem them from merited punishment, and bought their lost title for them. None of themselves could pay the least part of the price justly demanded, because all they could do would not have the least value to accomplish anything towards that end. All the labour done by any one for that purpose is altogether useless ; for " if righteousness come by the law, then is Christ dead in vain." Gal. ii. 21. .

2. An inheritance is bestowed upon the heirs independent of their own will and conduct.

The word rendered " we have obtained," is a verb in the passive voice, and therefore implies that we are passive in the transaction. Indeed, in our natural state we do not really desire it. It comes to us without our own agency, as an estate bequeathed by will comes to the legatee. Before one obtains the heavenly inheritance, he has no desire to receive it, indeed, until savingly persuaded, sinners refuse it when offered to them. Some fancy that they wish to have it, but what they desire is something entirely different. Unrenewed men are too proud to accept it as a legacy, nor can they consent to do so until they are enlightened spiritually to appreciate its great value, and are made willing to accept it ; for while they are in their natural state their heart can find nothing congenial to their taste in it.

3. We observe, therefore, that it was settled upon them by God in the covenant of redemption, and that

everything necessary to put them in possession of it was properly arranged. "Being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

If God works all things after the counsel of his will, he does everything necessary for his heirs to put them in actual possession of the inheritance. He works mightily in their hearts to induce them to accept it, and to fit them for the glorious blessedness in heaven that is settled upon them from everlasting, of which the title was duly purchased by Christ according to agreement. If it required the exercise of Divine wisdom and power to plan and carry out all the other works of God, much more did the devising and perfecting of the work of redemption and the producing of gracious effects on men's hearts; for these are the greatest works of God. If "he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth," in regulating the affairs of nations, much more does he so in the heirs of salvation. If he "hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of the habitations" of men, then the heirs of heaven have their lot predestinated according to God's good pleasure. In preparing his people for receiving the title to their inheritance, and fitting them for everlasting glory, he required to exercise greater power and wisdom than he did in carrying on all his other works. Besides the moral change in their souls, there is the change that

the bodies of the saints shall undergo in the resurrection. We are told that, when the Saviour will come the second time, he "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself." Phil. iii. 21. God will put forth upon the bodies of the saints to fit them for heaven the same power whereby all his enemies shall be conquered and overthrown for ever.

V. We must, however, notice God's end in bestowing the inheritance on his people. "That we should be to the praise of his glory."

Though God's essential glory is incapable of increase or diminution, yet he is pleased to display his attributes by his works, that rational creatures may admire his excellence. He does not need our praises, for they can add nothing to his blessedness; but there is no exercise so healthy to ourselves as adoration and thanksgiving. What God principally requires of us is praise. He represents other religious acts of obedience as much inferior to this. "Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goat out of thy folds: for every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.

I know all the fowls of the mountains ; and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee : for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats ? Offer unto God thanksgiving. . . . Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me." Ps. l. 7-14, 23. From this we may understand that, unless we aim at glorifying God, he is not pleased with any service that we render to him. He did so much for us, not only to display the glory of his attributes, but also that we should show forth his praises, not merely as the irrational creation does, but with an intelligent purpose.

Let those then, who are conscious of having never made the glory of God their end in anything, consider their position as guilty sinners exposed to the wrath of God. It is our duty and wisdom to pray to him to create in us a new heart and right spirit, that we may be able to rest on Christ for salvation. We need spiritual illumination that we may know him so as to be able to rest upon him for salvation with confidence.

DISCOURSE VIII.

BELIEVERS SEALED.

Eph. i. 13, 14: "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance unto the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."

THE apostle speaks of an inheritance to which the Ephesians and all believers were "predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the council of his own will." Though the right to it was purchased by Jesus Christ, and though they were appointed by the Father to possess it, yet they knew nothing of it until they heard of it "by the word of truth, the gospel of" their "salvation." When they believed in Jesus Christ, and began to hope that in due time they should be put in possession of it, they "were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which" was "the earnest of" their "inheritance."

I. Notice this work done in believers. They are "sealed."

1. This sealing is distinct from faith, for it is after that they believe they are sealed.

It is true that the Holy Ghost seals the truth

believed on the mind, and gives an assurance of it. The believer is persuaded that the objects of faith are true, and he rests upon them with a measure of confidence; but this is different from an assurance of his own interest in them. A person hears that a wealthy relative of his bequeathed his property to the nearest kinsmen. He knows himself to be one of these, and he firmly believes the report; but he is not sure of his own title to a share in it until his claim is satisfactorily established. Paul says of the Thessalonians that "the Gospel came not unto" them "in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance," so that they "became followers of" the preachers of the word, "and of the Lord." 1 Thes. i. 5, 6. Their hearts were persuaded of the truth, and drawn after Christ in a manner that was above the power of natural reason. They had the assurance of faith, for the truth was sealed upon their minds, so that they were convinced of the certainty of the things which were revealed by the word. It must be observed, however, that it is not of the sealing of the promises concerning Christ that the apostle speaks here, but of the persons of believers, and it is evident that it is distinct from faith. It is not the cause of faith, for it is after men believe that they are sealed. Whatever this sealing means, it takes place after the first exercise of saving faith, either immediately, or at an interval of some time. Being after faith, it is not regeneration, nor even sanctification

in the ordinary sense. Sanctification is a sealing, but not exactly what is meant in the text; for all the elements of holiness, or all the parts of the new creature, are formed in the heart in regeneration prior to faith, but this sealing is after they believe.

This sealing is with reference to an inheritance, and in that respect a seal is used for two purposes: first, it makes the inheritance sure; and, secondly, it makes the heir sure of the inheritance. It may be settled upon the heir by the testator, and the will may be duly sealed; but the heir may not yet be sure that he is entitled to the estate. The heavenly inheritance is sure to those for whom it was designed in the will of the Father, even before they believe, for "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his." 2 Tim. ii. 19. The Lord's purpose with regard to his heirs is sure in itself, though they, even after they believe, are not necessarily sure of their interest in the inheritance of the saints. This assurance is given by the Holy Ghost when he persuades them that the inheritance is theirs as "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." This is what the apostle means when he says: "Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God: who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." 2 Cor. i. 21, 22. The three expressions, "stablisheth," "anointed," and "sealed," mean an assurance of an interest in the promises and

of these good things whereof he gives an earnest in the heart. Of this sealing baptism is an emblem. In the Acts of the Apostles we read that when adults believed, they were baptized, and then the Holy Ghost fell upon them, and they rejoiced. When the eunuch was baptized, "he went on his way rejoicing." Acts viii. 39. Also, when the jailor was baptized, "he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." In the early days of the Gospel, the seal of the Spirit followed the external seal of baptism, and in modern days we ought to pray for joy in the Holy Ghost and assurance of our own salvation.

Assurance is obtained in two ways : a man is enabled by the Spirit to see the work of grace in his own soul ; and thus, to his comfort, he is persuaded that he is the subject of a saving work. This is what the apostle means when he says : "Tribulation worketh patience ; and patience, experience ; and experience, hope." Rom. v. 3, 4. Believers also obtain a direct manifestation of God in their souls by the Spirit ; for they have, at times, a living intercourse with God, an intuitive sense of his presence which does not require any process of reasoning to make it more satisfactory. Like the axioms of mathematics, the matter admits of neither proof nor argument. In the case any process of reasoning would be impertinence. Though this blessed realization of God's favour is satisfactory at the time, yet genuine believers do not rest upon it. We read that

“there are three that bear record on earth ; the Spirit, and the water, and the blood.” 1 John v. 8. The believer’s appreciation of the blood of Christ gives him the assurance of faith, but this, though real, may be so very faint that the person who rests upon it may fear that his faith is not genuine. He has the testimony of the blood, but he may not be able to apprehend it with clearness. Besides that of the blood there is the testimony of the water in the work of sanctification. This is an internal evidence, “the witness in himself,” which, when the Spirit enables him to read it, gives him “the assurance of understanding.” When it pleases him to do so “the Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” Rom. viii. 16. This is the assurance of hope, a sealing of us “with that Holy Spirit of promise unto the day of redemption.”*

II. Observe that this sealing is after we believe.

The apostles were believers, and trusted in God before they had received the Spirit to seal them and give them assurance of hope. The Spirit in regeneration enabled them to see the glory of Christ as of the only begotten of the Father, so as to believe and follow him, before he had given them a comfortable assurance of their title to eternal blessedness. Christ

* The author is indebted to the late Rev. D. McNab, of Renfield Street Free Church, Glasgow, Scotland, for the above exposition of 1 John v. 8.

said to them : "Ye believe in God"; but they needed more than that to cheer and strengthen them. Though spiritually enlightened in a measure, they did not clearly know the way to heaven, nor had they solid "assurance of hope." They had the Spirit, for Christ said so. "The Father . . . shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." John xiv. 16, 17. The meaning is evidently this: they had the Holy Ghost already as a sanctifier, for he had quickened them into spiritual life, and opened their eyes to know and lay hold of Jesus Christ by faith; but he promised to send him to them as the Comforter. The Spirit must come first into a man's heart to convert him, and then as the Spirit of adoption and joy. Cornelius and his friends by the Spirit's operations believed the Gospel as preached by Peter, and then he was given to them in richer measure so that they spake "with tongues and magnified God." Acts x. 46. "God which knoweth the hearts" saw that they believed, and "bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost." Acts xv. 8. Christ must first be yours before you can say that he is yours. He becomes yours by faith, and in due time you are enabled to know that you have received him to be yours. He may be yours in the purpose of God, but you are without him until you believe

He is not yours actually until you believe, nor can you be persuaded of your receiving him until the Holy Ghost demonstrates to you the fact when he seals you "unto the day of redemption."

II. Notice the Person who seals believers. "Ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise."

The apostle refers in this chapter to the part of each Person of the Godhead in our salvation. The Father "hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." In the Son "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace," and by the Spirit, who "is the earnest of their inheritance," believers "are sealed."

1. Observe that the Person who seals believers is called the "Spirit of promise."

Because the Holy Ghost is promised to believers to seal them, he is called "that Holy Spirit of promise." The great promise of the Old Testament was Christ, and the promise of the New Testament is the Holy Ghost. "We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath

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raised up Jesus again ; as it is written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Acts xiii. 32, 33. All the holy witnesses "having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise," that is, Christ. Heb. xi. 39. In New Testament times, when he came into the world he promised to send the Spirit, to "reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment," and to enlighten believers to their comfort. Before his ascension Christ said to his disciples : "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you : but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." Luke xxiv. 49. "And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water ; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Acts i. 4, 5. That great promise began to be fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, when by the Spirit who descended upon them, the apostles spake to the strangers present at the feast "the wonderful works of God" in various languages, and in answer to the scoffers who said that they were drunk, Peter said ; "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." Acts ii. 33.

“That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” Gal. iii. 14. God promised his Son, and in due time gave him; he also promised the Spirit, and he has also fulfilled his word. Besides the Son and the Spirit, God promises himself:—“I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” 2 Cor. vi. 18. “I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” Jer. xxxi. 33. If we are believers we have God’s promise of the Spirit, not only to sanctify, but to seal and comfort us. If we then appreciate the promise we will pray for its fulfilment. Those who rest on Christ by faith are then justified and pardoned, but they greatly need an assurance of the fact, and this is given only by the Spirit. This explains Peter’s words to those who were pricked in their hearts on the day of Pentecost:—“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost,” to give you an assurance of pardon.

2. Observe that he is the *Holy* Spirit.

“That Holy Spirit of promise.” He is called Holy, not only because he is essentially so, but also because he produces holy effects in believers in sanctifying and sealing them. He makes all whom he seals holy by that very act. This is the effect produced by the assurance that the Holy Ghost gives. If this blessed

result is not produced by the confidence and joy that are experienced, they are not from God, but merely the products of the flesh. There is a false assurance, not at all uncommon among professors, which, instead of producing charity, humility, and obedience, produces censoriousness, pride, and disregard of the will of God. It is only to those who earnestly cultivate holiness God grants his Spirit to seal them. Carnal Christians who are devoted to the world cannot have much comfort. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." John xiv. 21. It is when people desire, expect, and pray for this blessing that God ordinarily bestows it, and those who obtain it make real progress in holiness, and become fruitful in every good work. The apostles were comparatively carnal and feeble until the Holy Ghost came upon them on the day of Pentecost, but see how powerfully devoted they became immediately after. It might be said of them after the descent of the Spirit upon them that they were not the same men that they were before. They testified of Christ so fearlessly that their enemies quailed before them, and "took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." Acts iv. 13. A similar effect would be produced in us if we received the same gift, and we are as certainly commanded to look for it as were the:

apostles. Let us, therefore, pray for the fulfilment of the promise, and act like people who desire to receive it; for if we do so, we shall hardly have much taste for frivolous amusements, whether of a secular or religious character. Indeed, we should rather fear them; for they have a blighting influence on spirituality. Let us not then obey the flesh in its lusts, but do the will of Christ, that God by his Spirit may dwell in us, and be our God, and we his people.

3. Observe that the Holy Ghost is the *earnest* of the inheritance of the saints.

An earnest differs from a pledge; for the latter is something given in security for money or anything else that one may borrow, and it is of greater value than what is secured by it; but the former is of the same kind as the thing promised. An earnest is given to confirm the promise and pledge the promiser to fulfil his word. By it he binds himself, his property, and his character to stand by his agreement. In certain countries it is customary, when one hires a servant for a stated period at such wages as may be agreed on, to hand him a piece of money to bind the bargain. This is of the same kind as the wages promised, and pledges the honour and property of the employer to pay the stipulated wages when due. This God does to his people when he gives them his Spirit as the earnest of the reward promised to them. From this we may see what the object of their hope is.

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Seeing that the Holy Ghost, who is God, is the earnest of the inheritance of the saints, by giving him, God pledges his honour to give himself to his people as their everlasting reward. The Psalmist so understood the matter when he said :—"The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance." Ps. xvi. 5.

God gives his Spirit to believers to sustain them "until the redemption of the purchased possession." Though Christ redeemed them by a ransom, yet there is a further redemption. When the Holy Ghost works "faith in us, and thereby unites us to Christ," the redemption purchased by Christ becomes ours; but besides this there is the redemption of the body at the resurrection, for which the new creature waits; for not only does "the whole creation groan and travail in pain together until now, . . . but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Rom. viii. 22, 23.

III. Notice God's end in sealing believers by his Spirit. "Ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise . . . unto the praise of his glory."

It is for this high end that God performed all his works. He created the worlds with their inhabitants to display the greatness of his power, wisdom, and goodness. "The LORD hath made all things for him-

self." Prov. xvi. 4. "The heavens declare the glory of God." Ps. xix. 1. He made responsible creatures which he endowed with intelligence whereby they knew the duty they owed to their Maker. He gave them capacity to know himself, and to derive comfort from the gifts of his goodness wherewith he bountifully surrounded them. While they continued in this blessed state they admired the glory of God's attributes as they were manifested in his works. Though they clearly understood that God had a just right to their allegiance, they had yet no clear demonstration of retributive justice. It is when they revolted by transgression that they perceived themselves with horror to be bound to suffer merited punishment for ever; nor did any creature know that mercy for the guilty existed in the Divine mind until it was revealed. To exhibit the glory of all his attributes, God permitted some of his moral creatures to sin by disobedience to his will. When the rebel angels fell, he manifested his grace in fortifying other angels in their loyalty, but revealed his justice in delivering the transgressors into "chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." 2 Peter ii. 4. For the purpose of displaying his mercy he suffered man to disobey his will; and though in his treatment of the human race he shows his abhorrence of sin, he made known the glory of his grace by the intimations of his merciful purposes towards his chosen people which were made in Old Testament days, and

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by the fulfilment of these promises in sending his own Son into this world in their nature to make satisfaction for them. His glory is further displayed by the work of the Holy Ghost in applying the redemption purchased by Christ to men, and in sealing believers.

As every blessing that God confers on his people is to the praise of his glory, it is our duty to bless him heartily for them. If one is enabled to rest on Christ by faith, he should live to the praise of God's glory. If he has gospel assurance, he should exhibit his gratitude in holy submission to the will of God, and in practical love to God and men.

If the earnest of the inheritance of the saints is so glorious, and produces such joy in those who receive it, the inheritance itself must be unspeakably blessed, and if we have the earnest, we should serve God with patience until he sees proper to call us to our eternal rest. The question, however, is, whether we have accepted redemption from condemnation; if not, we have not the earnest of the Spirit, nor can we be "sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise," until we agree to God's proposal of deliverance through Jesus Christ. This is a matter of pressing importance that should be settled without delay; for sinners have an earnest of future misery, inasmuch as the devil dwells in their hearts. They have a foretaste of future misery in the various sorrows of life and the accusations of conscience. Sinners are certainly in great peril, but

escape is open. Let them, therefore, cast from them the earnest of woe, forsake the service of the devil, and engage with Christ to obey him in dependence on his grace to sustain them therein. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts : and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Isa. lv. 7.

DISCOURSE IX.

PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE EPHESIANS.

Eph. i. 15, 16: "Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers."

BECAUSE in apostolic days people had not such facilities of communication as we have, it is possible that Paul heard nothing of the Ephesians since he met their elders at Miletus, when he warned them of evils that he knew would arise among them, to corrupt their faith and morals. Until some years afterwards, when prisoner in Rome, his anxiety was relieved by good news concerning them. To this favourable report he gratefully refers, saying : "after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers."

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- I. Notice Paul's prayers for the Ephesians: "I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers."

The apostle had been the instrument of the conversion of the Ephesians, as we see recorded in Acts xix. 1-20. On his first visit to them such was his success that he remained three years among them; during which time he "ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." Acts xx. 31. After he left them he continued to pray for their spiritual prosperity; and it appears that he was stimulated to increased earnestness in this Christian exercise by the good report of their steadfastness in the faith which he had received. By this gratifying news his apprehensions of the rising of heresies and irregularities among them were much relieved.

1. Observe that it was Paul's custom to make mention in his prayers of those in whose welfare he was interested.

The word means either remembrance or mention. Here it evidently means the latter, for we do not say make remembrance, but have remembrance; but it implies that he remembered them. The remembrance of another in prayer is the root from which the mention of him springs. When the Holy Ghost binds believers to each other in Christian attachment, he causes them so to bear each other on their spirits that they refer to each other in their prayers. It was the apostle's custom

to act in this way towards churches and individuals. In the Epistle to the Philippians he said: "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart." Phil. i. 6, 7. The fact, that the Spirit brings persons, churches, and religious interests into the minds of devout people in prayer, is an encouragement to pray for them with confidence that God will grant their petitions on their behalf. The apostle often prayed for persons by name. "To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; 2 Tim. i. 2, 3. To Philemon he said: "I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers." Philem. 4. So warm was the generous-hearted Paul's Christian affection that he must have spent much time in intercession for others. In almost all his epistles he tells those to whom he writes that he prayed for them. "Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remem-

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bering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father." 1 Thess. i. 1-3.

2. Paul gave thanks to God for the grace bestowed on those in whose welfare he was so much interested. "I cease not to give thanks for you."

By prayer we declare our dependence upon God for what we want, but in thanksgiving we make an acknowledgment of what he has already bestowed on us. In the beginning of this chapter the apostle refers to several great blessings which God conferred upon the Ephesians, and hearing that they were effectual in producing faith and love, he heartily gives thanks to God for his liberality to them. As God was glorified by the fruits of his grace in them, Paul glorifies him by offering thanksgiving. We are bound to praise God for mercies received as well as to pray for mercies needed. "Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High: and call upon me in the day of trouble." Ps. l. 14, 15.

3. Observe that the apostle was constant in thanksgiving and prayer. "I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers."

It is as if he said: In my secret prayers which I offer to God I always mention you, asking him to bless you, and praising him for what he has already given you. He was persevering in his requests to God for himself and others, and mightily exemplified the teach-

ing of Christ, "That men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Luke xviii. 1. As he believed that, when he asked things necessary to his own salvation and that of others, for the glory of God, they would be given, he therefore persevered until it pleased God to grant his requests. In this he was encouraged by God's liberality in bestowing already such valuable gifts on himself and his friends. It is our duty to pray in faith for whatever things are needed to secure our own salvation, and for the manifestation of the glory of God by the gracious effects produced by the gospel: but for such things as are not expressly promised we should pray in submission to God's will. That we should praise God as we ought, we must be able to recognize his answers to our prayers; for our thanksgivings should correspond with our petitions. If we do not see that God answers our prayers, we cannot sincerely thank him; and words of gratitude that come merely from the head, but not from the heart, are simply hypocrisy. Let us then see how far we can perform this duty, or whether we can honestly thank him for anything. Some may flatter themselves that they can, but they had better see whether they are not mistaken. How can any one thank God if he does not savingly know him?

II. But we notice the apostle's reasons for thanksgiving. "Wherefore I also cease not to give thanks for you."

1. The word "wherefore" indicates an inference from what is already stated.

It might here be supposed to have some reference to what follows, but it rather seems to direct us to the preceding mention of blessings bestowed by God as the apostle's reason for prayer and thanksgiving. The consideration of these Divine favours filled his mind with hope, gladness, and admiration of God's bountiful grace "Wherefore," that is, for this reason, "I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers." When the apostle thought how they were chosen in Christ, predestinated to the adoption of children, redeemed by the blood of Christ, regenerated to faith and holiness, sealed by the Spirit, who is the earnest of our inheritance; and since he heard of their faith and love, he ceased not to thank God for them. He observed that all these blessings were bestowed upon them "unto the praise of" God's "glory," as his great end in all his purposes. As he himself was so much at one with God, he thanked him for such a display of his wisdom and goodness in the case of the Ephesians. If he praised God for his bounty to them, much more ought they to thank him for his mercy. He speaks of the matter as if he were a spectator, "I also." Seeing that I feel bound to express gratitude to God for you, surely you will thank him for yourselves. If Paul's thankfulness for the Ephesians should stir up grateful sentiments in them, it is clear

that the solicitude of godly friends about the salvation of kinsmen and acquaintances should deeply affect the objects of their concern. Suppose that this is read by a careless person who knows that his father, mother, or some Christian friend, has, for months or years, been wrestling with God in prayer for him, should not the knowledge of this fact awaken anxiety in his mind concerning himself? They understand his perilous position as he advances towards outer darkness, into which he may any day pass away from the comforts of this life, to the regions of woe, the everlasting habitations of devils and damned souls. They fear that, in the midst of his recklessness, or in a drunken state, he may be snatched away to lift up his eyes in the torments of hell. If pious people have such painful apprehensions of the possible fate of foolish sinners, ought they not to consider their own danger, and cry to God for grace that they may repent and believe?

2. Observe that God's gifts to the Ephesians produced such gracious effects upon them as were manifest to others. Their faith and love to the saints were so evident that they could be reported to the apostle.

Grace generally manifests itself in its subjects so that their acquaintances see by their lives that they are under its influence. It produces holy dispositions in various degrees in different believers. It causes some who are naturally proud to study to be humble,

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some passionate people to be meek, some mean people to be generous, some covetous people to be liberal, some extravagant to be provident, and some who were dissolute to become virtuous. It is not characteristic of those who savingly know the Lord to proclaim the same in words, but to exhibit it in their conduct ; for grace tends to make men modest, because it makes them more conscious of defects than goodness. Those who make the most satisfactory progress in the Divine life do not so much speak of their advancement as those who make least progress therein or none at all ; for the latter would fain pass for saints among men. A wealthy or learned man seldom speaks of his possessions or acquirements, whereas those who possess little of either often boast. Let us then study rather to have grace than to make a loud profession ; for by the former we shall glorify God, whereas by the latter we dishonour him if our behaviour be inconsistent with it.

III. But this leads me to notice the occasion of his increasing earnestness in his prayers and thanksgiving for them. "Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers."

The apostle was at their conversion an eye-witness of their faith and love ; for "many that believed came,

and confessed, and showed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burnt them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." Acts xix. 18-20. Some years afterwards, when on his way from Greece to Jerusalem, he landed at Miletus, sent for the elders of the church at Ephesus, and expressed to them his apprehension of the rising among them of serious errors in doctrine and morals; but when now some years had passed, he was credibly informed in his prison in Rome that they continued in faith and love. Being greatly refreshed by this report, he gave thanks to God for them. These two graces are often joined together in the Scriptures, and both are always in the hearts of God's people. Faith without love is not genuine. If "I have all faith," says the apostle, "so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." 1 Cor. xiii. 2. "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say that he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." James ii. 14-17. "We give thanks to God, . . . since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and

of the love which ye have to all the saints." Col. i. 3, 4. "I thank my God . . . hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints." Philem. 4, 5. "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment." 1 John iii. 23. "And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." 1 Tim. i. 14.

1. Observe that faith is mentioned here before love, and that wherever true faith is exercised on Christ, love manifests itself, for faith works by love. In regeneration, as soon as a person by faith apprehends God in Christ reconciling the world to himself, his affections are so drawn towards him that he cleaves unto him. The next movement of a believer's love is towards the saints. The principal object of saving faith is Christ, and the first exercise of it for justification is resting on Christ as he who died for us; or, as often expressed, Christ on the cross. There is much faith that never lays hold of a dying Saviour, but it is dead faith. The cross is the place where an awakened sinner becomes first united to Christ. People may have no doubt of Christ's birth, miracles, teaching, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven, but they need to rest upon him as his people's substitute offering himself to God to make an atonement for their sins, in order to their justification.

The apostle here means not merely the first act of faith by which they became united to Christ, but the continued exercise of it. He saw the first manifestation of their faith when they turned from idols to God through his preaching, but the faith to which he refers here was reported to him by others who saw its continued fruits. He calls it "your faith," and expresses his pleasure at the fact that it was well known to other churches. It appears that the Ephesians had a high reputation for faith. Paul says also of the Romans that their faith was "spoken of throughout the whole world." Rom. i. 8. These churches were distinguished for their faith. Some remember when the Free Church of Scotland eminently showed herself to be so richly endowed with the same grace that, to uphold the honour of Christ and the liberties of his people, she gave up her temporal support, cast herself on Christ for maintenance, and hopefully engaged in more than her former enterprises both at home and abroad; nor has she had to this day any cause to regret her trust in the Head of the Church. We occasionally see men who, because their faith is strong, accomplish far more than other believers in the work of Christ. There is, for instance, George Müller of Bristol, England, also Dr. Mackay of Formosa, China, and there was Dr. Duff, the prince of modern ambassadors for Christ to the heathens. The question arises. Why have we not strong faith as well as these? God

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is not less faithful to us than to them. May not the reason be that we do not know him sufficiently because we are not disposed to do his will. Our faith, if we have any, is well nigh being smothered by disobedience and the love of the world.

2. Observe that the faith of the Ephesians manifested itself by "love unto all the saints."

The apostle does not here speak of love to God, because where there is love to the saints as saints, there is love to God, because it is from it that Christian charity springs. "Every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him." 1 John v. 1. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." 1 John iv. 20, 21. If men do not love those in whom is the image of God, and because they discern it in them, they cannot possibly love God himself, whatever their profession to that effect may be.

It must be observed that love to the saints as such is much higher than general benevolence to men and natural kindness to relations. It is a supernatural affection, an exercise of the spiritual life implanted in the soul by the Holy Ghost. People may love believers as pleasant neighbours, but not because they are saints. The Saviour makes this distinction when:

he says: "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." Mat. x. 41, 42.

It is said of the Ephesians that they loved all the saints; and this I regard as no small trial of Christian charity; for there are some saints that are rather forward than amiable. Many of them are naturally proud, censorious, peevish, pettish, or not particularly scrupulous in some things. If we believe, however, that we discern indications of the image of Christ in them we are bound to love them, even if they condemn our conduct, injure our property, slander our reputation, and even hate us as enemies. It is hard to do this, but grace is able to sustain us therein; and if we honestly desire to exercise this charity, God will enable us to do it, and will give us much comfort in our endeavours. Let us, therefore, love the saints, that our souls may prosper spiritually, and God may be glorified in us.

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DISCOURSE X.

PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE EPHESIANS—CONTINUED.

Eph. i. 17, 18: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

WHEN the apostle, while prisoner in Rome, heard of the steadfastness of the Ephesians in the faith, and in love to all the saints, he was stirred up to give thanks to God for them, and to pray that he would enlighten them by his Spirit in the knowledge of himself, that they might know what was "the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints," and also the greatness of Divine power whereby they were renewed and sanctified.

In these verses there are two things to which I purpose to direct the reader's attention: The spiritual illumination of believers, and the valuable effects of it.

- I. Notice the spiritual illumination of believers.
"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit

of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened."

1. The Agent who enlightens.

Men may communicate knowledge of natural things to each other, as we can, by observation and diligent application of our powers, acquire knowledge both of physical and religious truths; but no one can apprehend spiritual things unless the Holy Ghost gives him the power of discerning the truths which are revealed to his mind by God. In this department we are altogether powerless; for the eyes of the understanding are blind, so that "the light of the glorious gospel of Christ" cannot shine into the hearts of those who do not believe. It is hard to convince sinners of this darkness and of their own inability to remove it. It is those who are enlightened who are truly convinced that it is God who enables them to know the way of reconciliation through Christ. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Matt. xvi. 17.

2. Observe that the chief blessing prayed for is the knowledge of God. "That God . . . may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him."

It was not the saving apprehension of Christ, whereby a sinner rests upon him by faith for pardon.

justification, and acceptance, that the apostle has here in view, seeing his prayer was for those who were believers already; neither is it merely an enlargement of the renewed understanding in spiritual truths, so that they might have clearer views of God and the principles of the Christian religion, but an experimental knowledge resulting from living communion with God. The minds of believers are enlarged by the study of the gospel, as were the two disciples who went to Emmaus, when on the way Christ "expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself"; but this might be done without their having spiritual fellowship with him. One may understand much of the character of a stranger, but he knows a friend with whom he is intimate in a very different way; to the one he is reserved, but to the other he is frank. One may have correct ideas of the properties of a certain article of food, but he who uses it, though not learned in chemistry, and though he may be ignorant of the elements of which it is composed, has an experimental knowledge of its strengthening effects. Natural men may have intelligent views of God and Divine truth, but they do not know him as their friend; and some believers may have an intelligent conception of the principles of the Christian religion, while men far inferior to them in intellectual acquirements may excel them much in holiness, through the knowledge produced by intimate fellowship with God constantly

maintained. When Christians attain to a good measure of this experience they have increased liberty in drawing near to God, and find it good to do so; for then they have courage to speak to their Almighty Friend of all things concerning themselves and others in whose welfare they are interested. Sometimes they have much to say of these matters, and it gives them great relief to pour their joys, sorrows, or perplexities into the ears of a faithful friend on whose sympathy, aid, and wisdom they can rely. God, in return, imparts his mind to them, and often gives them assurance of his interest in their welfare. When Moses, with great familiarity, but holy reverence, prayed to him, saying, "I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight . . .," God replies, "I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken; for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name." Ex. xxxiii. 13, 17. In their friendship they mutually knew each other. We find the same holy familiarity exemplified by Abraham when he interceded for Sodom. The Psalmist refers to it, when he says: "It is good for me to draw near to God." Ps. lxxiii. 28. Christ said that the intimacy between him and his disciples was like that between himself and his Father. "I know my sheep, and I am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father." John x. 14, 15. This is so important a part of spiritual

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religion that every one of us should strive to attain it, and to continue steadfastly therein. As it is the fruit of holiness, it cannot be enjoyed regularly without prayer and watchfulness. "We do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." Col. i. 9, 10. It is those who are careful to please God who grow in the knowledge of him, and this in its turn promotes holy obedience and comfort. Peter says, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God." 2 Peter i. 2. To those who cultivate communion with him, God gives spiritual comfort.

3. Observe that this knowledge is bestowed by "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation."

It seems that the "Spirit" here mentioned is the Holy Ghost, because all Divine revelations are made by him. The apostle says that the things which no "eye hath seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, . . . God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for . . . the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." 1 Cor. ii. 9-11. The common distinction between knowledge and wisdom appears to be applicable here, and that it constitutes the difference between revelation and wisdom. In this

place it is not an extraordinary revelation that is meant, such as the prophets received when God communicated to them, for the instruction of the church, new truths that were not known before, nor such as Paul himself received from Christ to qualify him to preach the gospel, and of which he said : "The gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Gal. i. 11, 12. Though not the same as that, it resembles it inasmuch as it is not from man, but from God. "They shall be all taught of God." John vi. 45. It is common to all believers, but imparted in different degrees according to the good pleasure of God. It is called revelation because the matters revealed could not be otherwise known, neither can this experimental knowledge of God be communicated by one man to another, nor can any natural man know it at all. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father ; for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father : and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father ; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Mat. xi. 25-27. Seeing this knowledge is peculiar to believers, all other people are utter strangers to it. It is a new knowledge, a revelation of what those receiving it never saw or understood before.

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Natural men have some true, though dim, conceptions of God ; they know him to be omnipotent, omniscient, just, and benevolent ; but when he reveals himself to any one in the face of Jesus Christ, he obtains a view of him that makes his former notions appear as nothing. I meet a person for the first time in the dark, having light enough to ascertain something of his height, size, and strength ; but if we both come to the light, where I see his features, my conceptions of him will be very different from what I formed before, and the clearer the light becomes, the better do I see him, so as to understand more of him. The experimental knowledge of God is somewhat similar.

To know God by wisdom as distinct from revelation may be regarded as meaning the result of spiritual skill in turning all the means of knowledge to good account. It makes use of the word of God, the truths of the gospel, sanctified reason, with all other powers of mind and body, to secure the knowledge of God. It avails itself of all Divine ordinances of religious instruction ; it makes use of the views of God already obtained, and, in dependence on grace, the person possessing it endeavours, by their aid, to know God so as to have communion with him. He acts as a wise man who is made so by the Spirit of God. By revelation the end is secured in a more direct way than by wisdom ; and there are some weak Christians who know God but little in the way of wisdom, for the lack of the mental ability

necessary to exercise it. Such may excel in holiness, but they are deficient in power to instruct and help others.

II. Notice the valuable effects produced by this Divine illumination. "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

The clause, "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened," may be understood as in apposition to the clause, "may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and understanding in the knowledge of him," and explanatory of it. The meaning is, that they might be so perfectly enlightened as to know "the hope of" their "calling, and the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

1. Observe that it is by this illumination that the hope of the calling of God is known.

The word hope may mean either the thing hoped or the grace of hope. It often means the former, as in the following passages: "For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven." Col. i. 5. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Tit. ii. 13. It is, however, more frequently used for the grace of hope, and this seems to be its meaning here; for if it meant

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the thing hoped for, it would refer to the inheritance of the saints mentioned afterwards. There appears to be three distinct things, the knowledge of which the apostle prayed that they might obtain: "the hope of" their "calling," "the glory of his inheritance in the saints," and "the greatness of his power." We understand, then, "the hope of his calling" to mean the ground of their hope. He asked first of all in his prayer that they should have communion with God, then that they should have assurance of hope, then, for a knowledge of the glory of the inheritance of the saints, and last of all for a knowledge of the power of God which was able to fit them for the inheritance. By the calling is to be understood, not the external call of the gospel, but the "effectual calling" whereby in regeneration God caused them to rest on Christ by faith. The apostle prayed that they would be assured of their standing in Christ, and of the ground of their hope of glory. Every man that is in a state of grace should have assurance, because there is good ground for it, but we need power to discern it. On this account the apostle prayed for the Ephesians that the eyes of their understanding might be opened, that they should be able to see the evidence of their reconciliation to God. Some think that all believers have assurance of hope; but the truth is, though all the people of God have the grounds of it, many cannot see them with sufficient clearness to remove their misgivings; nor can they do

so but as the Holy Ghost enlightens them. For this purpose the apostle John wrote his first epistle. "These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." 1 John i. 4. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." 1 John v. 13. In the first epistle of John, as elsewhere in Scripture, we have various evidences of the gracious operations of the Spirit in the hearts of believers. "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." 1 John ii. 3. "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." 1 John iii. 14. "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." 1 John iii. 21. "He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." 1 John iii. 24. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." 1 John v. 10. In many cases, however, the faith is so feeble, and its voice as a witness is so faint, that we cannot perceive it. The evidence is discernible in proportion to the strength of the faith. There are places where every sound produces an echo, but a person may speak so low that he cannot hear it; or his hearing may be so defective that he cannot discern it. Every grace in us reflects the mind of God towards us, but it is not

always equally clear : it is sometimes bright, but often so dull that we cannot always see Christ in us. Though "the spirit of man" "knoweth the things of a man"; yet it is by the Spirit of God that we "know the things that are freely given to us of God." 1 Cor. ii. 11, 12.

Observe that the words of the text are not "the hope of" your calling, but "the hope of his calling," not the work done in us so much as the work done for us. There is an evil tendency even in believers to become vain-glorious when they discover the work of grace in themselves; but when the Holy Ghost causes them to see that it is God who works in them, pride is checked; for they observe that they have nothing which they did "not receive," and, if they did "receive it," they have no right to "glory" as if it was from themselves. 1 Cor. iv. 7. The more hope arises from the experimental knowledge of God, the more healthy believers are; but those who do little more than examine their own graces are generally feeble. Self-examination is a valuable duty, but to be strong and comfortable we need to have our eyes enlightened to know God and "the hope of his calling."

2. By this illumination believers know "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

The blessings reserved for the saints are an inheritance, the title to which was forfeited, so that it had to be purchased by Christ as their representative, who also redeemed themselves from condemnation and

merited punishment. In the appointed time they are born again of God, adopted, and thus actually constituted heirs of an ever-enduring inheritance that is "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for" them. 1 Peter i. 4. The whole of it is given to each of them, nor is the share of the rest any the less on that account. Some who are not heirs may receive valuable gifts, but are sent away, as Abraham did to his sons by Keturah, whereas he gave the inheritance to Isaac, the son of promise. Because believers constitute "the church of the first-born, which are written in heaven," they are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."

This inheritance is exceedingly glorious; for when beauty and grandeur are combined on a large scale we have glory. When, from an elevated position, we view a wide landscape containing many pleasant objects we call the sight glorious; as we often call the starry heavens, and the many hues of the evening clouds coloured by the rays of the setting sun. The Hebrew word for glory means weight, and the apostle seems to have that in view when he said:—"Our light affliction . . . worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." 2 Cor. iv. 17. When men in this life saw but glimpses of the glory of God they were overwhelmed by it. The disciples on the mount of transfiguration "fell on their face, and were sore afraid." The Roman soldiers shook "and became

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as dead men" when they saw the angel that rolled the stone away from the tomb where the body of Christ lay, and the pious women feared when they saw him. When the Lord appeared to Saul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus, "he fell to the earth," and when John, in Patmos, saw the glory of Christ in a vision, he "fell at his feet as dead." Though in heaven the glory shall be much brighter than anything seen in this world, the saints shall be fitted, not only to bear, but to enjoy it; for even their bodies shall be sufficiently strong. "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power." 1 Cor. xv. 42, 43. When Christ shall come the second time, he shall be "glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe." 2 Thes. i. 10. The glory of God shall be reflected by the saints in grandeur surpassing all his other works. Because they are his inheritance, and he theirs, he will dwell among them forever. This glory is said to be rich; for it shall be a display of the wealth of God. His saints are his jewels; not because they are intrinsically valuable, but because he made them so. In condescension to our weakness, the glory of heaven is described by the most costly things that we know; a city lighted by the glory of God "like a jasper stone, clear as crystal," and "very precious"; its walls of jasper, foundations of various precious stones, gates of pearl, and streets of gold. These are symbols whereby

the exceeding riches of God's inheritance in the saints are set forth.

This glorious prospect should stimulate believers to cultivate holiness, that they may be able to maintain communion with God, whereby his people are in this life fitted to dwell with him forever. Sinners should consider what loss they sustain if they despise this inheritance. They may now prefer the pleasures of sin, but the time is coming, when, if they do not repent in season, they cannot receive it, even if sought with tears as Esau did, when he was rejected, though he sought his father's blessing.

DISCOURSE XI.

PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE EPHESIANS—CONTINUED.

Eph. i. 19, 20: "That ye may know . . . what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places."

WHEN the apostle considered the great blessings which God bestowed upon his people, and having been informed of the faith of the Ephesians and their "love unto all the saints," he gave thanks to God, and prayed that he would still more enlighten their minds that they might "know what is the hope

of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to those who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places."

On this passage I purpose to direct your attention: To the power of God towards believers, the persons on whom it is exercised, and the things wherein it is revealed.

I. Notice the power of God towards believers.

1. Consider the greatness of this power.

In the Scriptures greatness is applied to the power of God when it is exercised in the work of grace and salvation. We have the phrase, "eternal power and Godhead" when the apostle refers to the work of creation as manifesting them. Riches is applied to the mercy and wisdom of God, but greatness seldom. We read of the riches of his mercy, goodness, and wisdom, but his power is said to be great. God brought his people "out of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand." Ex. xxxii. 11. The power of the Lord is great when he forgives sinners; so Moses understood the matter when he interceded for Israel. "I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, as thou hast spoken, saying, The LORD is long-suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgres-

sion." Num. xiv. 17, 18. We know that it requires great strength of mind to forgive known enemies who are bitterly opposed to us. In the matter our power is imperfect at the best; but because God's power of forbearance and forgiveness is infinite, he says:—"Fury is not in me." Isa. xxvii. 4. "Great is our Lord, and of great power." Ps. cxlvii. 5. The power of God, which is engaged to save his people, is as great as himself. No one's power exceeds himself, but seeing God is infinite, his power is infinite in greatness. To greatness the apostle prefixes here the word "exceeding," literally, "hyperbolical," that is, "hyperbolical greatness of his power," and means a power that excels all other power, not merely of creatures, but exercised by God himself in any other way than in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, and in the salvation of sinners. The qualifying word, "hyperbolical," is used by the apostle where he speaks of the superiority of the glory of the New Testament dispensation to that of the Old. "For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth," or hyperbolical glory. 2 Cor. iii. 9, 10. The power of creatures is nothing to that of God. Indeed "the weakness of God is stronger than men." 1 Cor. i. 25. That is, God, by feeble means, accomplishes greater

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things than men can do by all their power. His power towards believers exceeds all the power that stands in opposition to him; nothing can resist it. He saves his people in spite of all obstacles. At the resurrection Christ will "change their vile body, that it may be fashioned like his own glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself." Phil. iii. 21. Then death shall be abolished for ever. He will subdue all his enemies both in his people and in the world. He now causes all things, even wicked men and devils, to promote his purposes of grace towards the saints. Whether these enemies know the gracious ends he has in view, or not, they cannot successfully resist his will. Though the church is opposed by "principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places"; yet she shall be victorious, and "the gates of hell shall not prevail against" her. God's power exceeds all our thoughts, for he "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." Eph. iii. 20.

2. Observe that this power is efficacious. "According to the working of his mighty power," or, literally, the energy of the might of his strength.

The idea is doubled to show the infinite greatness of the power that God exerts to save his people. The force of the two words, "might" and "strength," is increased by the word, "energy." The purpose of the

Spirit by the phrase is to give an infallible assurance that he will carry out to a successful issue the object of the exercise of his power. Whenever God puts forth the "might of his strength," he will bring the thing to pass. This shows the absolute certainty of the salvation of all believers; for God exercises for that end the "energy of the might of his strength which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." As the resurrection and exaltation of Christ by the working of God's mighty power are accomplished facts, so is the salvation of believers equally sure, though not yet completed. Seeing that the power that did the one is engaged in the other, it cannot fail. "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary; there is no searching of his understanding." Isa. xl. 26-28. "With him is strength and wisdom." Job xii. 16. God "raised up" Christ, "having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." Acts ii. 24. It is not, therefore, pos-

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sible that God should fail in the salvation of his people. He could not leave his own Son under the power of death, neither can he leave the saints under the power of any evil, but will raise them to glory, and honour, and immortality.

- II. Notice those on whom this power is exercised.
"What is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe."

The contemplation of the mighty power of God, displayed in the works of creation, providence, and redemption, may so much excite our admiration that our speculative fancy may be greatly pleased. The enjoyment of their meditations may be such as to lead some to consider themselves spiritually minded, because they find pleasure in exercising their imagination on the greatness of God's works; but unless we know that ourselves have an interest in them we cannot obtain true solid comfort from our thoughts of them. To derive real satisfaction from the consideration of the exercise of God's mighty power we must know it to be "to us-ward." We must observe that the apostle did not pray that they should know "the exceeding greatness of his power" simply, but that they should know that it was wrought towards themselves. Devils and lost souls know that there is infinite power and riches of mercy in God, but that does not comfort them, because they know that they are not for them, What

cheers an anxious soul is to discover that the power of God is engaged to secure his salvation. It is this practical knowledge that we should strive daily to obtain; and let it be understood that it is attainable.

1. Observe that this power is not exercised on behalf of angels.

The holy angels do not need salvation, and fallen angels are utterly lost, nor does God spend his saving power and the exceeding riches of his grace on either: the former do not need it, and the latter have fallen beneath it, though we do not say that God could not restore them, but that there is no intimation that he ever will. We have, therefore, no right to think, or wish, that they shall be restored to his favour. It is true that the holy angels are sustained by the power of God in their blessed state, but they do not require the exercise of "the *exceeding greatness* of his power."

2. The exceeding greatness of the power of God is not exercised on natural men whom he does not renew to spiritual life.

Though this is the case, yet many such are the subjects of mighty operations of the Spirit which do not result in salvation. Corrupt nature is often so much stirred up by convictions, and so far enlightened that self-love is greatly roused to activity. Stephen charged the Jews with the sin of "resisting the Holy Ghost," which they would not do unless he had been striving with them. The apostle speaks of people

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"who" might be "enlightened," and "taste of the heavenly gift, and" be "made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and taste the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come," and yet might "fall away." Heb. vi. 4, 5. These effects are produced by the "power" of God, but not by "the *exceeding greatness* of his power." When God appeared in majesty on Mount Sinai, and in a voice of terror proclaimed the law, the people said to Moses: "Behold, the LORD our God hath showed us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth. Now therefore why should we die? for this great fire will consume us: if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any more, then we shall die. For who is there of all flesh, that hath heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived? Go thou near, and hear all that the LORD our God shall say; and speak thou unto us all that the LORD our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear it and do it." Deut. v. 24-27. They were greatly affected by what they saw and felt of the power of God, but it was only a temporary impression, for God said to Moses: "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always." Deut. v. 29. The solemn feeling soon passed away, and they sinned against God by making an idol. A little before his death Moses

faithfully declared to them that they were not truly converted. "Ye have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land; the great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs, and those great miracles: yet the LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day." Deut. xxix. 2-4. The Psalmist says of them that "when" God "slew them, then they sought him; and they returned and enquired early after God: and they remembered that God was their Rock, and the high God their Redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant." Ps. lxxviii. 34-37. Thus we see that, unless the exceeding greatness of the power of God is exerted upon men, they remain unrenewed and after some time they generally prove that this is the case.

3. Observe that in the salvation of his people God exerts the exceeding greatness of his power.

This seemingly bold statement the text bears out; for in the salvation of his people he puts forth the same power whereby he raised Christ "from the dead and" exalted him to "his own right hand in the heavenly places." In the manifestation of his grace, for the salvation of sinners, God engages all his attributes.

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He showed great power, wisdom, and goodness in the creation of the world ; but in the new creation he used "the *exceeding greatness* of his power." He shows riches of mercy to wicked men, but to his people he shows the exceeding riches of his grace. "I create," says he, "new heavens and a new earth ; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." Isa. lxxv. 17. The new shall so far excel the old that it shall dim its glory, as the sun does that of the stars. God will exhibit his power in the overthrow and punishment of the wicked, as the apostle says : "If God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction," but he makes "known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy." Rom. ix. 22, 23. He shows glorious power in his wrath in the condemnation of the wicked, but riches of glory, power, and all Divine attributes in saving men. God's love is engaged in the salvation of sinners, and it commands all his power. It is our duty to love him with all our heart, strength, and mind, because he thus loves his people. "I will rejoice over them," says he, "to do them good." Jer. xxxii. 41. The destruction of the wicked does not give him enjoyment, nor does he put forth all his power in it. "As I live, saith the LORD God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked ; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." Ez. xxxiii. 11. When God punishes he acts reluctantly,

but when he shows mercy he does it with all his heart and power. "I beseech thee," said Moses, "let the power of my Lord be great. . . . Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy." Num. xiv. 17-19.

III. Notice those things wherein this great power is revealed.

1. It was manifested in raising Christ from the dead, and in setting him at God's right hand in the heavenly places.

Christ came under the burden of all our sins, and it was heavy enough to crush all creation under its weight. He was exposed to the most powerful temptations that men and devils could bring to bear upon him, and he endured the fierceness of his Father's wrath. He was made a curse for us, that is, he was devoted to Divine vengeance, and he gave up the ghost under the load. Death seized him as its lawful prisoner, but the exceeding greatness of the power of God sustained him, so that no sooner had death laid hold upon him than it lost its power. He bore the curse, took it away, and after, as it were, resting a little from the mighty conflict, he rose a conqueror from the dead. "The exceeding greatness of the power" of God was proved by his resurrection. He not only overcame all that opposed him, but he was, by the same power, raised to the highest dignity and authority

in the universe; for he was set at God's "right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church."

2. The power that accomplished these great things is engaged in the salvation of every believer.

This power manifests itself in their regeneration. "What is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power." Though by the punctuation in our own and various other versions, except the Vulgate, the second clause is separated from the first; yet it is true that they believe by the power of God working faith in them; for "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith." Gal. v. 22. "By grace are ye saved by faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Eph. ii. 8. "Ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God." Col. ii. 12. It is true that it is we who believe, but in order to do this, our distrust of God, and the opposition of the carnal mind, stimulated to activity by the devil, must be overcome, and knowledge, power, and a trustful spirit must be divinely imparted to us. Before his conversion a man is under the power of the devil, and "taken captive at his will." 2 Tim. ii. 26. He walks "according to the

course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Eph. ii. 2. The devil fills men's hearts to do his will as he did that of Ananias to make him "lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land"; and as by his influence on the heart of Judas, when he entered it, he drove him to betray his Master, nor did he leave him until he hanged himself. When God brings "the exceeding greatness of his power" to bear upon a man the devil's supremacy in the heart is destroyed. Christ cometh upon the "strong man armed," overcomes him, and "taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth the spoil." Luke xi. 21, 22. The devil has such power that nothing less than Divine power can expel him from a man's heart.

Regeneration is compared to the transformation of one creature unto another specifically different. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fating together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain." Isa. xi. 6-9. To accomplish this marvellous change in a sinner, God

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takes away hindrances, and gives a new capacity to do what is good. He takes away the stony heart. He neither melts nor breaks it, but takes it away and replaces it by a new heart. He breaks the power of the carnal mind which cannot be reconciled to God, because it is enmity against him, and he creates spiritual mindedness. To accomplish this change requires a putting forth of greater might than God exercised in creating the world; for there is here a twofold work: that of destroying evil, and that of creating good principles and affections.

"The exceeding greatness of the power" of God is continually put forth in carrying on the work of grace in the saints, and in preserving them in the midst of great temptations. Though holy principles are implanted in them, the devil dethroned, the stony heart taken away, and the supremacy of the carnal mind broken; yet all these enemies still exist with considerable activity to seduce them, and they would certainly recover their lost position, were it not that believers "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." 1 Peter i. 5.

By "the exceeding greatness of the power" of God the bodies of the saints shall be raised in glory at the second coming of Christ. Then shall they "shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Mat. xlii. 43.

We should earnestly inquire whether we are the subjects of this exercise of Divine power. If we are, our supreme wish is to do the will of God, because self

is dethroned. But if we are yet under the dominion of sin and the tyranny of Satan, nothing but the power of God can set us free. He who is able to save us is waiting for our consent to his acting upon us by his Spirit. If we are willing he will work effectually in us.

DISCOURSE XII.

PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE EPHESIANS—CONTINUED.

Eph. i. 20-23: "That ye may know . . . the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

IN this chapter there is a summary of the fundamental principles of the gospel: for it informs us that "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" has bestowed signal favours on his people: he chose them to holiness, predestinated them "unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ," who redeemed them by "his blood"; he purposed to "gather together in one all things in Christ," provided an inheritance for his children, and for its enjoyment they are prepared by "the working of his mighty power which he

wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places."

Here we have a view of the Mediatorial dignity of Christ, and I purpose to direct attention to its relation to God the Father, to created dignities, and to the church.

I. Notice Christ's dignity in relation to God the Father. God "set him at his own right hand."

The word "set" means made to sit. "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand." Ps. cx. 1. He said it effectually; for with the exercise of "the exceeding greatness of his power, which he wrought in" him "when he raised him from the dead," he made him sit "at his own right hand."

This is a metaphorical expression; for, seeing God has not hands as we have, we must not understand sitting in this place in a literal sense. The phrase is a similitude whereby the supereminent glory to which Christ is exalted is set forth, and does not mean the posture of his body; for he is once at least represented as standing at the right hand of God. A vision of the glory of Christ was granted to Stephen, when on the day of his trial he addressed the Sanhedrim. "Being full of the Holy Ghost, he looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said,

Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." Acts vii. 55, 56.

The words, "God set him at his own right hand," mean that God, as the supreme Sovereign of heaven and earth, exalted Christ to universal dominion over all things. "The King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God," enthroned his own Son "on the right hand of the Majesty on high," called also "the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens," and called by Christ himself "the right hand of power." Eastern monarchs expressed their respect for those whom they highly favoured by placing them on their right hand, as if that was the greatest honour they could show them. In this manner king Solomon treated his mother, when he "caused a seat to be set for the king's mother, and she sat on his right hand." 1 Kings ii. 19. The mother of Zebedee's children desired Christ to bestow a similar honour on her two sons. Before David's death Solomon sat on his throne, and though the aged monarch was king of Israel until the hour of his death, the executive authority was delegated to Solomon. In like manner, though God the Father is the supreme and eternal Sovereign of the universe, the executive government of the mediatorial kingdom is delegated to Christ with unlimited authority to carry it on as he sees good. He is the King's Son who sits upon his Father's throne, and

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"shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth," and "his name shall endure for ever ; his name shall be continued as long as the sun." Ps. lxxii. 8, 17. Daniel "saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." Dan. vii. 13, 14. This is an honour that God conferred on no one else ; for "to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Heb. i. 13. In his exalted position Christ enjoys the highest dignity, honour, and fulness of blessedness. This is set forth in the Psalms : "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places ; yea, I have a goodly heritage." "In thy presence is fulness of joy ; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Ps. xvi. 6, 11. As his position is so high, and his duty so important, he is qualified by glorious endowments and eminent abilities to discharge them. He has infinite knowledge, unerring wisdom, and ample power to wield the sceptre of his kingdom. He alone was worthy "to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof," and therefore, "many angels," "the living

creatures," and "the elders," to the number of "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" proclaimed "with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." Rev. v. 11, 12.

2. Observe that it is God the Father who raised him to this dignity.

Christ declared that all power was granted to him by the Father. "All power is given to me in heaven and earth." Mat. xxviii. 18. He did not presumptuously arrogate it to himself, but it was duly conferred upon him in reward of his work, in terms of the agreement between him and his Father. He has therefore a right to it. As the eternal Son of God it is essentially his own, but, to redeem us, he "made himself of no reputation, and took on him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." Phil. ii. 7-9. Though he died, he is the source of life, and has the power to bestow it. "The Son quickeneth whom he will." Though he is exalted to supreme sovereignty, he was always the King who had the right to bestow a kingdom on whom he pleased. "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me." Luke xxii. 29.

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3. The time of his exaltation was when God "raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand."

As the eternal Son of God, he was always entitled to a place at God's right hand, but it was when he was raised from the dead that he was installed in his Mediatorial Sovereignty. Until he rose, and ascended into heaven, he was the Mediatorial King but as it were under age. It was "when he had by himself purged our sins," that he "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Heb. i. 3. "After he had offered one sacrifice for sins," he sat down for ever "on the right hand of God." Heb. x. 12. While he was on earth he was in the form of a servant, but when he finished his work, he put off that lowly guise, and assumed the insignia of the royalty which was his by right, because he earned it by his obedience unto death. For the service which he performed God highly exalted him. Because he was slain he is worthy to receive glory, honour, and riches.

4. Observe that the place where he enjoys his dignity is heaven. God "set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places."

The literal rendering is, in the heavenlies, and is by some understood to mean heavenly things; but as Christ's human nature is now, not on earth, but really in heaven, the meaning seems to be "heavenly places," as it is in our version. Heaven is the royal court

where the Mediatorial throne is. "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool." Isa. lxvi. 1. It is expressly stated that Christ "was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God," and will there remain, as to his human nature, until he come the second time to judge the living and the dead.

II. Notice Christ's high rank in relation to all created dignities. He is exalted "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come."

1. Consider the eminence of Christ's dignity.

The greatness of his exaltation above all ranks, the apostle could not express but by an indefinite word "far," and in Phil. ii. 9, he says: "God also hath highly exalted him," literally, super-exalted him. He "was made higher than the heavens." Heb. vii. 26. In these expressions the apostle illustrates this glorious truth by a reference to eastern royal courts and kingdoms where there were kings with absolute power, princes, high counsellors, governors of provinces, nobility, gentry, peasantry, and slaves; and some person exalted, for his services, worth, or some other reason, next to the person of his sovereign, above all dignitaries, and nearly all the king's royal power delegated to him, as was done by Pharaoh to Joseph, and by Darius to Daniel. These

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two men were exalted above all principality and power, and every name (except the sovereign's) in these kingdoms ; but Christ is by God exalted far (infinitely) above all powers and authorities in the universe, not only human, but angelic powers, whether good or bad. He has a right to be set over them, because "by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers." Col. i. 16. Having all the angels, good and evil, under his control, he executes his purpose by them in this world. It appears from the prophecies of Daniel that these spirits have power over the affairs of kingdoms, for some of them are called princes of certain nations. An angel came to the prophet and informed him that, in answer to his prayer, he was dispatched from heaven to comfort him, but that he was detained for one and twenty days by the prince (angel) of the kingdom of Persia, until Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help him. Dan. x. 13. From this we learn that evil angels rule the affairs of men in this world, and act under the direction of "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience," and that Christ appoints holy angels to protect his people and to superintend their affairs. All these, as well as human rulers, are subjected to the sovereign authority of Christ.

2. Observe that Christ's authority is not only supreme, but universal.

He is exalted "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion," and also above "every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." There is nothing exempted from subjection to him. He exercises his authority over all things in this world, and will exercise it also in the world to come. He rules now in heaven and on earth. Though heaven exists now, yet to us, as far as the actual enjoyment of its blessedness is concerned, it is to come. Though this world will pass away, the world to come shall continue through eternity, and in it Christ will be for ever higher in dignity than all creatures. It is true that, when the last judgment shall be over, and all enemies put under his feet, he will deliver "up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power." 1st Cor. xv. 24. Though he shall then yield his sovereign authority as Mediator to the Father, yet his super-eminence over all created dignities shall continue for ever, for through him all blessedness shall flow to the redeemed through all eternity. But the phrase, "the world to come," may have a reference to some future period wherein the sovereign glory of Christ may be more conspicuously displayed among men on earth than it has yet been exhibited. Some may understand by the expression, the thousand years during which Satan shall be bound by the sway of the gospel over all nations; but this is

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a matter about which good men have considerable dispute: for some maintain that Christ will come bodily to remain on earth with the saints during that period, and others with better reason, as it seems to us, hold that his coming then shall be spiritual, and powerful in the conversion of sinners by the means which he has appointed for that end. It is supposed by sound expositors of Scripture that the last judgment shall extend over a period of another thousand years, which is not at all improbable; for though Christ could fully investigate the cases of all men in the shortest time, we could not clearly understand the ground of his decision in every single case in that time. It is reasonable to suppose that all minds shall be fully convinced of the equity of all his proceedings on that day. His appearance on that grand occasion shall be the most glorious display of his super-eminence over all creatures, as all his enemies shall be put under his feet.

III. Notice Christ's dignity in relation to the church. God "gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

1. Consider God's kindness to the church in giving her such a Head.

She is raised to wonderful dignity by her union to such a glorious Head. That she, who is, in herself, not only worthless, but sinful by nature, should be

raised, purified, and advanced to the position of Christ's spouse and queen, is marvellous grace. We admire Esther's preferment, when she, an obscure Jewish maiden, was chosen out of all the young women of Persia to be queen to Ahasuerus, but her exaltation to that exalted rank is not to be compared with the honoured position of those who are united to Christ, as bone of his bones, and flesh of his flesh. From the time of the formation of the union he communicates his own life to them, and continues to do so without intermission for ever, as their life, strength, and guide. He watches over them to protect them, and provide for all their wants. He administers to their necessities with unerring wisdom and unfailing affection.

2. Consider the honour God did to Christ as to his mystical body.

God so loved the church from everlasting that, when regarded as guilty and polluted, he gave her to Christ to be redeemed, so that she might become his loving spouse for ever. When he gave a human nature (body and soul) to him, as was the case of the first type of him, it was not good that he should be alone; he made therefore a gift of the church to him, that its members might be his companions. He was certainly worthy of her, for he gave himself for her to redeem her, nor was there another who could do this but himself. The Father honoured him above all others; for, knowing his ability, he chose him to deliver the church.

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By his people the glory of Christ is displayed more than by anything else ; she is his mystical body, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all." The church is empty in herself, but he fills her with all grace and whatever else she needs. Without him we "can do nothing." We are poor, but he, who is infinitely rich, bestows his wealth on us ; we are guilty, he has righteousness to justify us ; we are naked, he has white raiment to clothe us ; we are blind, he has eye-salve to cause us to see ; we are perishing of want, he is the bread of life. He filleth all in all, because all fulness dwells in him.

The church is the fulness of Christ ; for without his body he would not be complete as Mediator, nor shall he be full in this respect until the last member of his body be united to him, and all grown up to the stature of his fulness. If a person lacks a hand, foot, finger, or any other part of his body, there is an uncomely defect, for he is not full ; but in Christ there shall be no defect.

Practical Remarks :

1. See the love of Christ to the church in accepting her as a gift from the Father when he knew what her redemption would cost him ; but he "loved it and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot

or wrinkle, or any such thing ; but that it should be holy, and without blemish." Eph. v. 25-27.

2. Consider how glorious Christ shall appear when his mystical body shall be complete. He will surpass all "when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." 2 Thes. i. 10.

3. As the body of Christ is not full yet, sinners are invited to come to him to be made members of it. Will you not then consent to be united to him? He is waiting for you, and earnestly asking your consent. What do you say to him on the subject? Speak your mind to him with regard to the matter. Beware of refusing his offer, for it shall not be always made.

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DISCOURSE XIII.

THE SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION OF BELIEVERS.

Eph. ii. 1-10 : " And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins ; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience : among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind ; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved ;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus : that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith ; and that not of yourselves ; it is the gift of God : not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

THE apostle prayed that God would give the Ephesians spiritual understanding that they might know the salvation of the gospel which was imparted to them by " the exceeding greatness of the mighty power " of God whereby he raised Christ " from the dead, and exalted him to his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might,

and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church," and whereby he also quickened, raised, and made them sit together with Christ in the same heavenly places.

In this passage we have the spiritual resurrection of believers, the motive that prompted God to accomplish it, and the end he had in view in doing so.

I. Notice the spiritual resurrection of believers.

1. Observe that a resurrection implies previous death. "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

According to God's warning to Adam death is the punishment of sin. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Gen. ii. 17. The same truth is asserted by the apostle. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." Rom. v. 12. Such is the nature of this death that it increases sin through the moral corruption of men's nature which it produces, so that those who are under its power "walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience," and live "in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." When a living creature dies a chemical change sets in whereby putrefaction is produced. Spiritual death

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produces an analogous effect ; for by it the character of the sinner is become loathsome to all holy beings. This deterioration goes on, nor have sinful men any power left them to arrest its progress, so that without the infusion of life by Divine power, it shall reach a degree of such confirmed depravity that recovery shall be impossible. This terrible progress, with all its outward manifestations, is what is here called walking "according to the course of this world." This course means not merely the direction in which the world goes, but also the mighty stream of moral corruption by which natural men are borne along. They are willingly carried by its current, nor can they resist it, because they are dead. It is those who are quickened by the power of God that really struggle against it, all others yield to its force. The living do not sometimes appear to make much progress against it, but with more or less energy they struggle. This distinguishes the living from the dead. Natural men move as they are influenced by the course of the world brought to bear upon them by "the prince of the power of the air"; but believers resist steadfastly because they are sustained by the power of God. In this matter, however, there are false appearances, inasmuch as many seem to move against the main current when they are merely fallen into an eddy of favourable circumstances to be yet caught in the great stream to be hurried into the dead sea of wrath at last unless previously quickened

by the Spirit of life. Whatever reformations unrenewed men make, they are still controlled by the devil, the "prince of the power of the air," who, while he carries many rapidly downwards, controls others more gently; he has one class in the violent current, but others in apparently still waters, so that it is hard to say in what direction they move; some are profligate, others virtuous, some openly irreligious, others seemingly devout. The difference between natural men may be considerable, but they all walk "according to the course of this world" until quickened to spiritual life. Many, who are in some degree sensible of danger, think that they will yet turn from the unsafe course which they now pursue, but the greatest part of them still pursue their foolish career until their lusts, through long indulgence, acquire an uncontrollable power over them. Some people do not believe that they are in much danger, because the majority of men live much the same as they do. They do not think that a benevolent God will consign so many to perdition. They regard themselves safe in following the customs of society, while they do not violate the laws of propriety. In such ways does "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" deceive men. They so admire the spirit of the age that they regard those who conscientiously follow God's directions in his word as fanatics, who, on account of prejudices, are incurably unprogressive. Many of these, in their mistaken con-

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fidence in the power of human nature to raise itself to holiness, zealously advocate improvements in morals and religion that are merely devised by men without any sanction from God, as if any reformation could rise higher than the perfect law promulgated by infinite wisdom.

The end of this death is everlasting destruction ; for those under its power are called "the children of wrath." They commit these deeds for which the "wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience," for they live in "the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." These phrases, "children of wrath" and "children of disobedience," are solemnly significant, inasmuch as they indicate the sad truth that natural men are ripening for wrath through disobedience wherein they live as an element. "The desires of the flesh and of the mind," called also "the law of sin and death," control their lives to the fulfilling of their demands until, unless rescued by Divine power, they plunge them into eternal misery in hell where they shall imperiously rule them forever without affording them any of the pleasures that they gave them while they were in this life. The inhabitants of that place of woe shall be tormented by their own corruption, by conscience, called also "the worm that dieth not," and by the wrath of God.

2. This resurrection implies a restoration to life. "He hath quickened us together with Christ."

As Christ is the representative of his people by Divine appointment, his death, quickening, resurrection, and exaltation, was legally their death, quickening, resurrection, and exaltation, so that their spiritual quickening was secured by his merits. When, with regard to each of them, the time of grace comes, the Holy Ghost, according to the arrangement made in the covenant of grace, breathes life into his soul, whereby new sensibilities are produced which at first cause pain through a conviction of guilt, ignorance, and moral impotence. His experience is supposed to be somewhat like that of a person in a state of insensibility when he is being restored to animation. Some have been in such distress at that mysterious time that they can never forget the impression it made upon their spirits. In this life, besides sensibility, there is illumination, so that those who are quickened by it receive the power of discerning spiritual things. Through this power given to them, they receive, not only conviction of sin, but also such knowledge of Christ as enables them to rest upon him for salvation.

3. This leads me to observe that spiritual quickening is invariably followed by a resurrection. He "hath raised us up together" with Christ.

Those who are spiritually quickened shall not be left in darkness to die again, but shall be enabled through the light given to them to discern Christ so as to act upon him by faith. Inasmuch as by this first

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saving act of the newly quickened soul he becomes vitally united to Christ, he is spiritually risen with him because he legally rose in him when he rose from the dead. In proportion to the strength of his faith, a believer can call the death and resurrection of Christ his own death and resurrection.

4. We observe that those raised with Christ are exalted together with him. "He hath . . . made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

When Christ sat upon the Mediatorial throne in heaven, those, on behalf of whom he acted as representative, were virtually enthroned in him in consequence of the agreement between him and the Father. When they rested on him by faith, they became actual citizens of heaven. Though they are not actually introduced into the capital of Christ's dominion to behold the full display of his glory while they are in this world, yet they are "delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son." Col. i. 13. Being made kings and priests unto God, suitable privileges are confirmed to them by an unchangeable charter. God has promised to them by an oath that they shall be crowned with glory, "so that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, they may have a strong consolation." Heb. vi. 18. That they may be properly trained to act their part becomingly in his royal palace in heaven, they are left for a time on earth where they exercise

their spiritual powers in order to their sufficient development. God assigns to each of them a work in this world, the performance of which is fitted to educate him for his high destiny.

II. Notice God's high motive in raising his people from spiritual death.

1. We observe that he was not influenced to do it by any consideration of their worth, for they "were dead in trespasses and sins."

Being Satan's slaves they had no inclination to render obedience to God. Because they were averse to holiness their minds were alienated from God. In consequence of the steady progress of spiritual decay, moral corruption constantly increased in them. They were loathsome to holy beings. Justice demanded that the punishment merited by their transgression should be inflicted upon them to the utmost. There was, therefore, no moral excellence in them on account of which God could bestow such a favour upon them.

2. God did not quicken them on account of their good works. "Not of works, lest any man should boast."

The Pharisees hoped that, by the punctual observance of the Mosaic ritual, with the addition of the commandments of men, they should merit the favour of God, but their expectation was vain, for Christ denounced them more severely for wicked hypocrisy

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than he did any other class of men. This false hope has always prevailed in the church, so that multitudes, in all sections of it, have trusted in their performance of duties. The works done may serve valuable ends, but they do not merit such a reward as restoration from spiritual death to spiritual life, or any other reward. If God were in the matter to act on this false principle, a disturbing element would be introduced into his kingdom that would destroy the harmony of heaven, because jealous dissensions, through boasting, would spring up among its inhabitants.

3. We observe that God raised his people from spiritual death because he loved them. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

He saved them through faith, because he greatly loved them. As faith is necessary in order to union to Christ, every believer must therefore exercise it in order to salvation, though no one naturally possesses it, nor can any one originate it in himself, for "it is the gift of God." If we originated in ourselves the faith which connects us with Christ, we would certainly boast. It is not partly produced by God and partly by ourselves, but wholly by God, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it

is the gift of God." The following statements of Scripture are of the same import:—"And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power." Eph. i. 19. "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God." Col. ii. 12. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith." Gal. v. 22.

III. Notice God's end in the spiritual resurrection of his people. "That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

1. Observe that God's grace is so rich that it shall never be exhausted.

Few men, if any, have appreciated God's grace as Paul did. It was much enhanced to him by the affecting view he had of his own unworthiness. "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I might preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Eph. iii. 8. In view of his opposition to Christ in the past, he greatly admired his grace. "He put me into the ministry, who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was

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exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." 1 Tim. i. 12-15. If all believers do not equal Paul in his high estimate of God's grace, they discover that its riches exceed the demands which their poverty makes upon it. They may think that they draw very largely upon it to supply their necessities, but they cannot exhaust it, because it is infinite.

2. God, at this present time, shows his grace to his people.

When believers look back on the time wherein they lived in sinful unbelief they admire God's grace in bearing with them during those days of ungodliness. When the time determined came, in his mercy, he implanted a living principle in their dead souls, so that they were quickened to spiritual life. Since that time, by the gracious exercise of his Divine power, he enabled them to rest on Christ by faith, and has given them many proofs of his favour. Indeed they cannot enumerate the gifts which he has bestowed upon them. God gave his Son to redeem them, sent the Holy Ghost to apply to them the redemption purchased by the Son, and he has given himself to them to be their God. They are exceedingly enriched; for God is the portion of their inheritance. They have no reason to desire an exchange of conditions with princes, kings, or

emperors, for by grace "all things are theirs, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come." 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22.

3. God quickened, raised, and exalted his people that he might show the riches of his grace to future ages.

The expression "ages to come" means not only the endless period of future glory, but also all ages from the days of the apostles. The salvation of the saints recorded in Scripture, including Paul, shows to us "the exceeding riches of God's grace." Were the history of believers, who now live, put on record, as was that of the apostle, the grace of God towards many of them would be no less worthy of admiration. When the whole history of the administration of God's grace shall be made known, holy creatures shall with raptures sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb: "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou king of saints." Rev. xv. 3.

IMPROVEMENT :

1. Have we been quickened from spiritual death? If we have, we have turned our faces resolutely against the polluted stream of the course of this world because we discovered that, to walk according to it, is to be led to the dead sea of Divine wrath under the influence of "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." The current

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may seem too strong for our small strength, but, if quickened, we struggle, though feebly. We find ourselves forced to act in various ways in opposition to the world, though we are often called prejudiced bigots. If we do not suffer any measure of this petty persecution we have reason to examine our sincerity. "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you."

2. Believers should adore the great love wherewith God has loved them, so that he quickened, raised, and made them sit together with Christ in heavenly places. They should act as citizens of heaven in rendering cheerful obedience to their King. They should appreciate the exceeding riches of God's grace so highly as to be ready to commend it to others.

3. Sinners, seriously reflect on the course by which "the prince of the power of the air" leads you to ruin. Whatever your external life is, unless you have been quickened you are led to destruction. Consider the end of the course that you pursue. God, in his mercy, offers to rescue you in the exercise of his grace. If affected by a conviction of the danger of your course, cry to God to impart life to your soul that you may by faith lay hold on Christ for salvation.

DISCOURSE XIV.

DEAD IN TRESPASSES AND SINS.

Eph. ii. 1-3: "And you, . . . who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

THIS chapter is a continuation of the subject which the apostle discusses in the close of the first chapter where he refers to "the exceeding greatness of the power" of God towards believers, "according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." . . . and also wrought in the Ephesians, "who were dead in trespasses and sins."

I. Consider the condition of believers before they are renewed and justified. They are "dead in trespasses and sins."

1. Death implies a previous life.

We all had life representatively in our first parents while they continued holy, stood in the favour of God.

and enjoyed communion with him. As Adam was constituted our head, if he had maintained his integrity, we would have remained in the same holy and happy state; but when he fell by transgressing the commandment of God, he died spiritually, and we died in him. God gave him clear warning of the terrible consequences if he should eat the forbidden fruit; but, by yielding in an evil hour to the temptation, he involved all his posterity in his own guilt and punishment. On that account we are by nature "dead in trespasses and sins."

2. This death is not an extinction of life in every respect.

As in temporal death the body only dies, for the soul still lives on in the exercise of its faculties—indeed the Scriptures intimate that its powers are then enlarged, because their activities are not impeded by the body—so in spiritual death the body and mental faculties live, but in eternal death, when the whole man is banished for ever from the enjoyment of all happiness in the presence of God, the body and soul shall live in eternal misery. The consideration of these truths is important, seeing that some people deny that spiritual death wholly incapacitates men from performing acts that are truly good; and because others, on account of it, justify their own disobedient failure in discharging their duty. As we have reason, memory, conscience, will, and bodily activities, we have power

to know what is right and wrong ; we can also determine our own actions ; but we have no pleasure in God and holiness, no inclination to love and trust him ; nor can we call right dispositions into existence. In this respect we are without ability to quicken ourselves, because we are totally dead. If quickened, it must be done by "the exceeding greatness of the power" of God, "which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead."

3. Spiritual death consists in guilt and moral corruption.

Sin shuts a man out from the favour of God and exposes him to his wrath ; on this account a sentence of death is pronounced upon him, so that, though he lives physically and intellectually in this world, yet he is dead, being under a sentence of death, nor does he know the day nor the hour of its execution. On this account sinners are "all their lifetime subject to bondage" through the fear of death, that is, the infliction upon them of merited punishment. Such is the power of this death that, through the fear of it, they often commit sin to avoid it. A sad part of spiritual death is subjection to the power of sin. Natural men are dead in "the uncircumcision of their flesh," that is, they are corrupt by birth, and this evil is increased by actual sin, nor have they power to arrest the process of deterioration.

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II. Notice the life that believers led while in their natural state.

The apostle said to the Ephesians : "And you, who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience : among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind."

1. Observe that natural men, though spiritually dead, yet walk.

This is a seeming contradiction ; but the connection of the two opposite ideas sets forth the fearful condition of sinners ; for were we to see the physically dead walking, we would be horrified ; for we would conclude that they had some mysterious and unnatural life. The expression, "ye walked," teaches that, though "dead in trespasses and sins," the Ephesians were alive in other respects. As the dead have no sensibilities, no desires, and no enjoyments, so the spiritually dead have no saving knowledge of God, no desire for holiness, and no pleasure therein ; but they have pleasure in sin, for their nature is wholly inclined towards it. This is their moral life. They have "the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart : who being past feel-

ing have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." Eph. iv. 18, 19. Men must have pleasure, but when they have it not in God, they will have it in sin, so that those who are dead in it are alive to its allurements. Because they derive their enjoyments from sin, they walk in it. They have a life, but it is a life in sin. There is a time coming, however, when all the comfort they derive from sin shall cease. In the place of woe, there is no pleasure; therefore, the condition of its inhabitants is called the second death. They cannot cease from sin, but, instead of comforting, it shall torment them for ever.

Walking in sin means that a man's life is altogether sinful. Sin is the element wherein he lives, nor can he exercise any member of his body or power of his mind without it. While men walk "according to the course of this world" and of "the prince of the power of the air" they cannot cease from sin. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Isa. lvii. 20. They "cannot cease from sin." 2 Peter ii. 14. They walk carelessly and securely, nor do they consider whither their course leads them; each is like Solomon's "simple one," of whom he says:—"He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it

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is for his life." Prov. vii. 22, 23. Because in this course sinners go farther and farther from God, it is called a departing from the living God. Unless arrested by Divine power and grace, they will never stop until they go so far that there will be no return for ever.

2. The way wherein they walk is the way of trespasses and sins.

This exhibits the character of unregenerate men, and shows that their natural disposition is to walk in sin, as that of the godly is to "walk in the Spirit." The apostle said to the Ephesians that this was the course which they once pursued, but that when quickened they returned into the ways of God. The Psalmist distinguishes the godly from the wicked by the life that they respectively lead. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." Ps. i. 1. So natural is the way of wickedness to unrenewed men, that, though at times they may appear to turn from it to the path of holiness, it is but a seeming reformation, a change from one set of vices to another set, whereas not a few soon turn to their former "crooked ways," and at last "the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity." Ps. cxxv. 5. As a godly man may fall into sin, but will not walk in it, so a wicked man may, through fear or some other selfish considera-

tion, he led to go in the path of virtue, but he will not do so from real regard for God, nor will he continue therein. Judas followed Christ in company with the other disciples, but the love of the world prevailed on him at last. While in his selfish covetousness, he expected personal advantages from his adherence to Christ, he continued with him; but when he understood that his temporal prosperity would not be advanced thereby as he desired, he took his own course and perished. Those, in whose heart sin rules, follow "the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness." 2 Peter ii. 15.

3. Observe that the guides, whereby sinners are led, are "the world, the devil, and the flesh." "In time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air." And "we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh."

The phrase, "the course of this world," is peculiar; if literally rendered, it would be "the age of this world." It evidently means the prevalent spirit of the world, that is, the principles, tastes, and customs of worldly men. It is equivalent to the phrase, "the spirit of the age," which some commend as a safe rule of conduct. The idea here is the principle that governs the life of ungodly and worldly people, the "world that lieth in wickedness." 1 John v. 19. Christ said to his disciples: "If the world hate you, ye know

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that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you." John xv. 18, 19. Many deceive themselves and say that they are not worldly, simply because they are not industrious and provident, nor greatly desire riches; while at the same time, being slaves to the people of the world, they adopt their views, tastes, fashions, and manners. Many have no other guide than the sentiments and customs of those among whom they live. To save their souls they cannot refuse conformity to the ungodly conduct of their associates. Many a young man cannot withstand the alluring influence of his companions, whereby he is drawn away from virtue; though his conscience opposes him, he takes a part in their improper practices. As the world is too strong for him, he serves it, though at times with reluctance. A young woman will act like her acquaintances and neighbours, even when she knows that the course is neither prudent nor right; because she is a slave to "the course of this world," she cannot break its yoke, or free herself from it. The Ephesians, before their conversion, walked in the same sins wherein other Gentiles walked, and in religion they were like their fellow-citizens: they were borne along by the same stream; they worshipped Diana, and if they had not been renewed and enlightened by the Holy Ghost by means of the gospel, they would, on the day of the uproar in Ephesus, join

the multitude in the cry—"Great is Diana of the Ephesians." Carnal men, notwithstanding separate interests which cause differences on various matters, concur in dislike to true godliness. The outward manifestation of their character may change with times and places, but their dispositions are always the same. "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh." Rom. viii. 5.

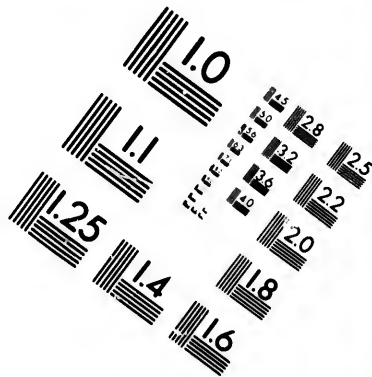
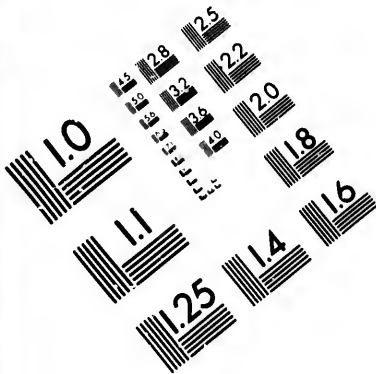
Besides the influence of the world upon natural men, they are in addition controlled by the devil. "Ye walked . . . according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." If the first is powerful and arbitrary, the second is still more mighty, and he is, besides, a cruel tyrant. The world leads people to sin principally by example, but the devil drives them to sin; for he is a prince who has a kingdom wherein he exercises great power over all the children of disobedience. It appears that he resides in the air, wherein he exercises his kingly power over the whole world; he has innumerable spirits, his companions in the original revolt, under his control, and they all act in concert, not merely on, but in, the children of disobedience. They allure them to sin by presenting various inducements to them, whereby they impose upon sinners who are willing to be deceived. By entering the heart, they act upon the appetites, passions, lusts, and tastes, and mightily rouse them to evil. By fanning the fire of evil desire,

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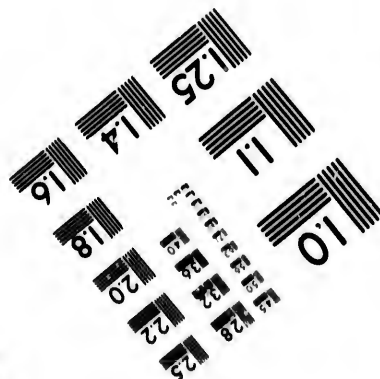
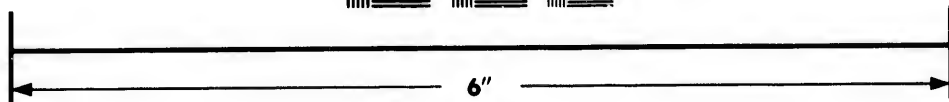
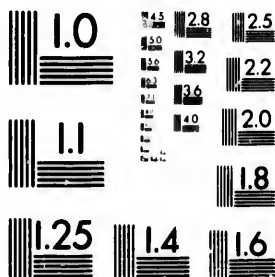
they cause men to rush irresistibly to the commission of sin. Because his kingdom is a monarchy, he has all his hosts skilfully arranged; and as they are all mighty spirits of great knowledge and experience, they know men so well that they act upon them in such ways, and at such times, as are best adapted to give them success. The superior of all the rest is he who alone is called "the prince of the power of the air," and his subordinates are styled "principalities, powers, and rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places." Eph. vi. 12. The chief is called the devil and Satan in the original Scriptures, the other spirits are called demons. Considering then their power, order, industry, skill, malice, and terrible success in "blinding the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them," the Ephesians might well admire the grace whereby they were delivered from their power, "and translated . . . into the kingdom of his dear Son." Indeed all believers in every age may well thank God for their deliverance from the mighty power of the spirits of darkness.

In addition to the malign power of the world and the devil, the flesh exerts its influence as their ally. The apostle says: "We all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." If the two former leaders are terrible, the last is more dangerous, because





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more subtle. It is a part of ourselves and within us, inasmuch as the lusts of the flesh were generated in us, and are cherished by us. The world and the devil are foreigners, but the lusts are natives who can use the faculties of our souls and the members of our bodies as their instruments for evil. Being the progeny of the devil, begotten by him on our own fallen nature, it is often hard to distinguish them from the inclinations that are essential to our well-being. Because they are in alliance with the devil, their father, he rules by their means over men's souls and bodies, so that he brings them into subjection to himself. He conceals himself by means of the lusts of the flesh, so that people observe not him, but their own desires only. The devil sets the lusts on fire, and deluded men think their happiness consists in satisfying them: but if they saw the incendiary at work, they would be more likely to refuse compliance with his will. Such are the powers that rule over natural men, that, unless delivered from them by the energy of God's might, ruin must be the result.

III. Notice the misery of men while in their natural state. We "were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

1. Observe that those to whom the apostle refers were some Jews and some Gentiles.

We, Jews, as well as you Gentiles, "had our con-

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versation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." This was unusual from a Jew, seeing that **they** were wont to call the Gentiles dogs and sinners, and to regard themselves as the chosen people of God and saints; but Paul was a Christian, and discovered that there was no difference in that respect between the one people and the other. In the Epistle to the Romans, he proved from Scripture and experience that both were equally under sin. The one had no cause for boasting over the other, and "the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." Rom. x. 12.

2. The prospects of unrenewed sinners are dark, for they are the children of wrath.

God is not angry with any one without a cause. We are, therefore, by nature, the children of wrath because we are guilty and corrupt sinners, not merely sinners every one of us in every part of us, but sinners and children of wrath by birth. When our first parents by their first sin incurred the wrath of God, they involved their posterity in the same evil, so that every one is born under condemnation with a corrupt nature that produces evil as soon as he is able to act. We provoke God to anger continually. Sinners treasure up unto themselves "wrath against the day of wrath"; and, because bound over to punishment, they are called the children of wrath, as some were called "the

children of the captivity," "children of disobedience," and Judas, "the son of perdition." To be called "children of wrath" is a solemn expression which teaches us that upon all who are not united to Christ "the wrath of God abideth." They are under condemnation to suffer the punishment due to their sins.

Let sinners consider, however, that they may escape from this awful state, for believers were once in the same condition. If some were delivered from it, others may be delivered as well. If any one is alarmed by a sense of danger, and well a sinner may be alarmed, let him cry to God for deliverance. Be not discouraged because you cannot save yourself; for God sent his Son to make an atonement for sin. If you find inability to rest on Christ's finished work, the Holy Ghost will be given to you to apply the redemption purchased by Christ, if you ask him, with an honest desire to receive him, to make you able and willing. God commands you to look to him for all that you need to save you. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." Isa. xlv. 22.

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DISCOURSE XV.

GOD'S LOVE TO HIS PEOPLE.

Eph. ii. 4-6: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

I. **N**OTICE the great benefits that God has bestowed on his people.

1. He quickened, raised, and enthroned them with and in Christ.

The phrases "with Christ" and "in Christ" express two different things. To be quickened, raised, and enthroned with Christ is to share these blessings with him. When a sinner is awakened from spiritual death to a new life, he shares with Christ the life of God, with all the gifts and graces that dwell in him; for "of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." John i. 16. God the Father, as the fountain of life, hath given life to the Son, with sovereign power to communicate the same to us, to quicken and raise us to a life of holiness. "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." John v. 26. "As the living Father hath sent

me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." John vi. 57. As God has perfect life in himself, he decreed to impart the same to his people. For that purpose he communicated life to Christ as Mediator, who is therefore called "the Word of life," and became incarnate that he might impart life and happiness to men. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." 1 John v. 11. Christ speaks of his people as the Father's gift to him, saying: "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." John xvii. 6. "That I should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given me." John xvii. 2. The Godhead dwells in the human nature of Christ as a quickening Spirit, quickening us together with him, and graciously carries on that work, by imparting grace to us until we become fitted for uninterrupted communion with God according to our capacity. Believers share now with Christ, though in an imperfect degree, the same life that is in him, with its purifying and comforting effects, because they are destined to participate with him in the full enjoyment of God through all eternity.

Believers are raised with Christ, inasmuch as they experience "the power of his resurrection." Phil. iii. 10. When quickened, they become active, for the new life must exercise itself. When Christ revived in the tomb, he came forth never to return; and so when a sinner is awakened to spiritual life, he goes forth

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immediately in its power to "walk in newness of life." This effect is produced by "the exceeding greatness of the power of" God upon those "who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." Eph. i. 19, 20. This power shall work in them, nor shall it cease till they be made entirely like Christ. It shall not only sanctify their nature in the entire destruction of sin, but it shall also "quicken their mortal bodies," so that at last their whole man shall share in the life, resurrection, and exaltation of Christ. Then there shall be a complete fulfilment of the ancient prophecy: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." Isa. xxvi. 19.

The saints share in these blessings with Christ, because they have them in Christ, for the phrase "in Christ Jesus" applies to the quickening, the raising, and the sitting in heavenly places. When the Head of the Church died, revived, arose, ascended to heaven, and sat on his Mediatorial throne, all his people died, revived, ascended, and were enthroned in him; because in acting for them he earned for them the reward of his toils, sufferings, and death. When he was "justified in the Spirit" by his resurrection from the dead, they were all justified federally in him. It would be

incorrect to say that they were justified actually then; for they are personally under condemnation until, being quickened, they believe in Christ. The resurrection and exaltation of Christ declare the acceptance by God of the satisfaction made by Christ and his judicial discharge from all further demands of justice on behalf of all for whom he acted. In his justification they were federally absolved, and their personal justification, pardon, resurrection of their bodies, and eternal glory were made sure to them.

2. We observe that these benefits were secured to them when they "were dead in sins," and that this shows the greatness of the favour bestowed upon them.

They owe their quickening wholly to God, for they were not simply passive, but resisting therein. To create the world in the beginning was to call into being what had no existence, and could not, therefore, oppose the Divine fiat, but to produce the new creation it is necessary to overcome the opposition of the carnal mind, that is, of all the depraved tastes, desires, and inclinations of the natural man. In effecting this, the exceeding greatness of the power of God is put forth. The prophet's representation of the miserable condition of sinners by nature is affecting and striking, and though spoken directly of the original state of Israel, it contemplates the condition of lost sinners. "Thus saith the LORD GOD unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy

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father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite. And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live." Ez. xvi. 3-6. The description of the sinner's state in the context is that he is not merely abandoned with no one to care for him, but "dead in trespasses and sins; wherein" natural men walk "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience"; and that he also had his "conversation in the lusts of" his "flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and was by nature a child of wrath."

If believers are kept by the power of God, and if the life given to them is maintained in activity by him, it takes infinite power to impart life at first. If we consider the new state into which they are raised and the duration of it, the goodness of God will appear very great. The life infused into them is everlasting. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." John iii. 36. It is a life that "is hid with Christ in

God," and will, therefore, endure as long as Christ will endure, that is, for ever.

II. Notice the Person who hath bestowed these benefits upon them. "But God, who is rich in mercy, . . . hath quickened us together with Christ."

1. Observe that God is not merely said to be merciful, but "rich in mercy"; as if the apostle regarded this Divine excellence as among the most precious of the attributes of God.

We call men rich, not on account of every thing they possess, but on account of the most valuable things they have. The apostle speaks of some as "rich in faith." They might have had many other gifts, mental powers, and noble traits of character; but their faith is counted as their riches. The peculiar treasure in which God has the highest pleasure is his mercy. Though God is said to be rich in mercy, grace, wisdom, knowledge, and glory, he is nowhere said to be rich in wrath, justice, or power. These latter are infinite attributes of his nature, but he does not delight in their exercise in the punishment of sinners. He "is rich unto all that call upon him." Rom. x. 12. The meaning is that he is rich in goodness and compassion. He saw us destitute of all things necessary to our well-being, and, in his mercy, he made Christ unto us "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

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1 Cor. i. 30. It is in this that God would have us to glory, because he was pleased by it to make his glory known. If it is a man's "glory to pass over a transgression," much more is it the glory of God to have mercy on the wretched who deserve eternal punishment.

2. Observe that there is abundance of mercy in God.

No one is rich in anything unless he has an abundance of it. God's mercy is so great that it overflows. "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope." 1 Peter i. 3. In God there is fulness of mercy. "According to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." Ps. li. 1. "O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me." Ps. lxxix. 13. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Isa. lv. 7. God's mercies are innumerable. To meet our wretched condition the case would need to be so; for our sins and miseries are without number. We have no want but God has mercy to remove it; he has a balm for all our wounds. He has remedies for all our diseases, and can effectually cure them, however obstinate they may be. He has tender mercies to soften hardness of heart; he has a fountain of living water to cleanse all pollution thor-

oughly, however filthy we may be. If any one is oppressed with guilt, "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." 1 John i. 7. For the poor he has "gold tried in the fire," for the naked he has "white raiment that" they may "be clothed," and that "the shame" of their "nakedness do not appear," and for the blind he has "eye-salve" that they may see. Rev. iii. 18. To examine our condition, and to apply the proper remedies, we have a great Physician who possesses unfailing skill, inexhaustible patience, and unbounded compassion. "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all things tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Heb. iv. 15, 16. The mercies of God are inexhaustible. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." Rom. xi. 33. God exercised his knowledge and wisdom in devising ways of showing mercy. The Psalmist had a comfortable view of God's benevolence when he said: "Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep: O LORD, thou preservest man and beast. How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God!" Ps. xxxvi. 5-7.

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III. Notice what prompted God to bestow these benefits on his people. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us."

1. Observe that mercy merely respects misery, but love bestows favours.

Love is a desire to communicate the greatest good, and mercy is a desire to deliver from distress. Parents love their children as they are their children, but when they fall into trouble love stirs up mercy, which exerts itself to relieve them. Divine mercy rescues the miserable, but God's love advances them to honour, that they may be blessed for evermore. Because a benevolent man pities any one who is afflicted, he is disposed to comfort him, whoever he may be; but if the object of his compassion is one whom he loves, his affectionate regard for him gives intensity to his mercy. It is God's nature to pity the distress of his creatures, but the affliction of the objects of his love moves his compassion to take effectual steps to deliver them from their miseries. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him." Ps. ciii. 13. If God's love to his people has the command of the riches of his mercy, we may rest assured that it will be sufficiently dispensed. In the meantime he regulates the gifts of his love by wisdom, and shows mercy to the extent that is necessary to secure the well-being of his people. But the time is coming when he will

give them all the blessings which they shall be capable of enjoying.

2. Observe that love is the foundation of mercy and the cause of exercising it. God "is rich in mercy for the great love wherewith he loved us."

God's love moved him to show mercy. He is under no necessity of nature to extend his compassion to his creatures in acts of benevolence. His practical kindness is regulated by his will, for he pardons whom he pleases. In proclaiming his name before Moses, he said: "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." Ex. xxxiii. 19. God pardons greater sinners than many he passes over, and if he saved none, his mercy and every other attribute of his nature would be even then infinite. Our salvation is, therefore, of his good will. Because it pleased him to love his people from eternity, his compassion was moved by their misery to have mercy on them in an efficient manner. As God's love fixed upon its objects, it moved his wisdom to devise the proper method for relieving them from their wretchedness, and it urged his power to carry out the work to perfection. As nothing else could accomplish the end in view, so that the desire of his love should be satisfied, God appointed his own Son to work out a deliverance for his people, and in the fulness of time sent him forth, "made of a woman, made under the law." Gal. iv. 4. "For God so loved

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the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John iii. 16.

3. Observe that God loved his people when they were enemies. "Even when we were dead in sins he hath quickened us." They were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved them," in due time imparted spiritual life to them. He loved them when they were children of wrath. It may, indeed, seem strange that a child of wrath, who is under the curse, should, at the same time, be loved by God with a great love. "We ourselves," says the apostle, "were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us." Titus iii. 3-5. God loves his people when they are objects of his displeasure, for if earthly parents have similar feelings in some degree, we may expect God to love his children even when disobedient. An undutiful son provokes his father's anger, but still he loves him while he reproveth and chastises him, that he may be brought to a sense of his faults. It must be observed that the objects of God's love are not mere characters but persons; for character is only an abstraction, a nothing but as it is found in individuals.

4. Observe that this is a great love.

It is great, because the Person who loves is great in power to give it efficiency, great in understanding to know the necessities of the loved ones, great in compassion to have mercy on them, great in wisdom to manage all things necessary to their welfare, and great in faithfulness to bestow all good upon them. He continues to be the friend of his loved ones for ever. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me." Isa. xlix. 15, 16. It is great, seeing it holds out in all its warmth against the provocations of its objects. It is great on account of the antiquity of its origin; for it is not of yesterday, but from eternity. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." It is great because of its stability, for it is a love that endures for ever. For these reasons nothing can destroy or cool it. "Many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it." Song viii. 7. It is great, seeing God, on account of it, made an infinite sacrifice for the loved ones; for he gave his own Son to suffer and die for them.

It is then becoming that we should express our appreciation of God's love by grateful obedience to his will, by affectionate attachment to himself and his cause, by hatred to sin and love to holiness, by humble

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confidence in him, and by a profession of our faith in Christ in every way that he appointed.

Sinners! Do not despise God's love, nor continue to reject his mercy. He offers his love to you with a promise to forgive all your sins, if you turn from your evil ways and come to him. He swears by himself that he has no pleasure in your perdition. "As I live, saith the LORD God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?" Ez. xxxiii. 11.

DISCOURSE XVI.

GOD'S GREAT DESIGN IN THE WORK OF REDEMPTION.

Eph. ii. 7: "That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

GOD, from all eternity, chose a people for himself, whom he predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, whom he appointed to redeem them by his blood, that their sins might be forgiven. When dead in trespasses and sins he quickened them together with Christ, and in him he hath raised them up together, and made them to sit together in the heavenly places, "that in the ages to come he might

show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward them in Christ Jesus."

In this verse we see that God's great design in the work of redemption was to "show the exceeding riches of his grace." I will, therefore, direct your attention to the riches of grace that God designed to show, the times in which he designed to show it, wherein he shows it, and the Person by whom he shows it.

I. Notice the riches of grace that God designed to show.

1. The word, "show," leads us to observe that God's highest end in our salvation is to manifest his own character. No one can know God's nature and attributes further than he reveals himself in his Word and works; but as he has pleasure in making himself known to his creatures, he exhibits "the exceeding riches of his grace" in saving his people. The apostle says, that God, "who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see; to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen," shall "in his times" show "our Lord Jesus Christ" at his appearing. 1st Tim. vi. 14-16. God, who is infinitely blessed in himself, may, in his absolute sovereignty, communicate the knowledge of himself

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to his creatures, or not, as he pleases. He, "whom no eye hath seen, nor can see," dwells in light inaccessible, and being sufficient in himself, he is under no necessity to reveal himself to any one. That his creatures might be blessed he chose to display his glory by sending his Son into the world to reveal his power, goodness, love, mercy, and grace. For further displays of his character, he appointed him to come the second time to judge the living and the dead, when he will show forth his glory by the ransomed whom he will present to the Father without "spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

2. There is nothing in God's character that he desires to show more than the riches of his grace.

The qualifying word, "exceeding," is connected with the "greatness of his power" in the preceding chapter, and here it is joined to "riches of his grace." Between power and grace there is this important difference: in the exercise of the former, God may, or may not, impart blessedness to his creatures; for the lost in hell are punished by his power, but no comfort is imparted to them, whereas in the exercise of his grace God communicates happiness. It is well for us that God has made the exhibition of his favour his supreme end in our salvation; for he necessarily bestows blessings on his people when he shows the riches of his grace. There is no feature of God's character so well fitted to strengthen the faith of believers as his kind-

ness. An awakened sinner, deeply convinced of his sin, cannot well derive comfort from God's wisdom, power, and holiness, and he finds it hard to see how God could love him ; but when the gracious disposition of God, whereby he freely bestows good things on undeserving sinners, is impressed on his mind, peace and hope possess him. There is no doctrine of the gospel that satisfies a guilty soul like the great truth that God's supreme end is to declare his own glory by showing forth the riches of his grace. "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake." Isa. xliii. 25. "Say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the LORD GOD; I do not this for your sakes. O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went." Ez. xxxvi. 22. By these and similar statements God intimates to us that he saves and blesses, not for anything in us, but for himself. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." Rom. ix. 15, 16.

3. The grace of God is supereminently rich both in forgiving sins and in bestowing gifts.

The apostle, in his reference to the quickening and exaltation of believers in Christ, ascribes them to God's riches of mercy, and, rising in a climax, he says this was done "that in the ages to come he might

show the exceeding riches of his grace." The experience of all the saints shall cause them to concur in this. When men first receive forgiveness of sin when they turn to God, they find him rich in mercy; when they advance in spiritual life they find him richer in mercy and grace, and at last, if not in this life, at all events in the life to come, they will find that there is exceeding riches of grace in him towards them, so that each of them can say:—The LORD hath "dealt bountifully with me." Ps. xiii. 6. God is not only rich in mercy and grace with respect to abundance, but he is exceedingly rich in grace. He exceeds the most wealthy who is the most generous in bestowing gifts, for his liberality exceeds the demerits of his people. "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depth of the sea." Micah vii. 18, 19. "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7. He forgives all kinds of violations of his law, because there is superabundance of grace in him. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men," except the blasphemy

against the Holy Ghost. Mat. xii. 31. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land." Isa. i. 18, 19. "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee." Isa. xlv. 22.

He is exceedingly generous in bestowing rich gifts. The apostle says: "Trust . . . in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy." 1 Tim. vi. 17. He gives us the earth with all it contains for a dwelling-place as long as we need it, and he is preparing mansions for his people in glory. He surrounds the earth with an atmosphere fitted for us to live in. He poised the sun in space at a proper distance from us, to give us the amount of light and heat which we need to support us in comfort. Without attempting the impossible task of enumerating all the temporal mercies he bestows on us, let it suffice to say that he fills "our hearts with food and gladness." Acts xiv. 17. Though temporal things are valuable, they are infinitely surpassed by the spiritual blessings that God has richly provided for his people. A view of them caused David to say: "O LORD, for thy servant's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all this greatness, in making known all these great things. O LORD, there is none like thee, neither is there any God besides thee, according to all that we

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II.

have heard with our ears." 1 Chron. xvii. 19, 20. God has a generous heart to give liberally in his infinite wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, whereby he devises and distributes blessings in the way that is best calculated to promote the happiness of the objects of his bounty. "The LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Ps. lxxxiv. 11. He possesses all good things, and will bestow them on the saints. When his people were bound over by justice to merited punishment, he gave his own Son to redeem them, and "he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. viii. 32. Seeing that when dead we were unable to accept the redemption purchased by Christ, God gave his Spirit to quicken, renew, and make us able and willing to embrace Christ as he is freely offered to us in the gospel. He giveth him richly to sanctify us that we may be prepared for the full enjoyment of himself in glory. He "sheds him forth abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." Titus iii. 6. He gives himself to be a Father, friend, and benefactor. "I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

II. Notice the times wherein he designed to show the riches of his grace. "That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace." This means all succeeding ages.

1. God designed to show to gospel ages the riches of his grace towards the Ephesians and other believers in apostolic days.

Under the Old Testament dispensation, before Christ came, died, rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God, the saints could not then be said to be set in the heavenly places together with Christ as it can be said now. Since Christ, as the representative of his people, has entered into heaven to take possession of its glory and blessedness for them, he has sent the gospel to all nations to make the fact known; so that the Ephesians and others in their day, who were enlightened to believe it, were constituted examples and witnesses of the exceeding riches of God's grace to all subsequent ages. Through them also God made known "that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel." Eph. iii. 6. Though there have been so many ages since the days of the apostle during which God has largely bestowed favours on many, his grace is not exhausted, nor even diminished in the least; for it is exceedingly rich, and will be so in all coming ages to all eternity. We are entitled to infer from this passage that, seeing God dealt bountifully with Jews and Gentiles who believed the gospel in Paul's day, he will, in future ages, deal with equal, if not greater liberality with both.

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2. But there are ages to come after gospel ages, when a new state of things shall be established, after the present dispensation shall pass away. In common with Premillennialists we expect an era of great glory on this earth; but we believe it shall be a period wherein there shall be great gospel prosperity through a grand display of the power of the grace of God before the second coming of Christ, when gospel ages shall close for ever; but they believe that Christ will come personally, not spiritually merely, to reign with the saints for a thousand years previous to the last judgment. With this difference, we and they believe that there shall be a time of great glory yet in this world. We both look for the second coming of Christ. It must, however, be said, that, while there are certain things that betoken the dawn of better days, there are many things in all the churches of Christ in the world so disheartening, that, were it not for certain explicit promises, we would lose hope, and be apt to fall in with the Premillennialists in despair. An alarming spirit of æstheticism, as it is called, and ritualism has pervaded all branches of the church of Christ, so that one is often tempted to fear that Popery will yet prevail over the whole world. Though this feeling is weakness, yet the rising of dark clouds threatens rain, but the heat of the sun may dissipate them, nor do we at all doubt that the Sun of Righteousness will drive these threatening evils away. If

the displays of the glory of God are so glorious in the ages of this dispensation, what may we not expect in the ages of eternity, when there will be no dark, earthly vapours to obscure its light? Then the objects of his favour shall receive all blessings to the utmost of their capacity, that they may shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. There are hidden riches treasured up in God, which are not fully revealed yet; but, in the heavenly ages, the treasure shall be thrown open, and every one shall be permitted to draw from it as much as he can, for there shall be no restrictions there, but men's own ability to use the blessings of Divine goodness. When millions of ages shall pass, the treasury shall be as full as at the beginning; for Divine love cannot be exhausted by its outgoing to its objects, neither can generosity that has boundless resources to exercise itself upon become less. As God is infinite and unchangeable, so are all his attributes; and he has designed "that in the ages to come" he will "show the exceeding riches of his grace.

III. Notice that wherein he shows the riches of his grace. He does it "in his kindness towards us."

1. God's grace is not a mere display of liberality, but the result of kindness.

It is possible to exercise great liberality simply with a view to display one's own wealth and open-

handedness. A king, or some other great man, might so act for his own glory only. When Parmenio asked Alexander the Great to give him a little money to meet pressing necessities, he gave a sum so large that the modest general exclaimed in astonishment, "O, sire, this is too much." To this the vainglorious monarch replied, "It is too much for Parmenio, but not too much for Alexander." That act of generosity was prompted rather by a desire to display his own riches and liberality than by kindness to his servant. It is not so, however, with God; for while his own glory must be his supreme end in all things, the exercise of his grace is invariably prompted by his kindness to his creatures. Mercy is a good disposition, and God is rich in mercy; but it only respects misery, whereas kindness implies affectionate friendship. This shows that the exceeding riches of God's grace are the outgoings of his love. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John iii. 16.

2. God is glad when he bestows favours on his people.

King Ahasuerus "made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces," to show "the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honour of his excellent majesty"; but God displays his glory in the

exercise of the exceeding riches of his grace to give himself pleasure in doing us good. "I will rejoice over them to do them good." Jer. xxxii. 41. To the church the prophet says: "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty: he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing." Zeph. iii. 17.

IV. Notice the Person by whom he shows the riches of his grace. "That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

1. There is no communion between God and the saints but in Christ; for it is on account of the merits of Christ that he deals graciously with them. It is in him that he hath blessed them with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. It is in vain that any one expects the favour of God without Christ. If therefore we desire to obtain the saving blessings that God bestows on his people we must accept Christ as he is offered to us in the gospel, that we may hopefully come to God in his name for all good things. As long as any one rejects Christ he rejects the favour of God, and cannot obtain forgiveness, or any other saving blessing.

2. God loves Christ and his mystical body together. A greater love than this cannot be conceived, for when

the saints shall come to heaven they shall be received by the Father as he received Christ at his ascension. The same kindness he has to him he has to all true believers, and as he set him at his right hand until all his enemies shall be made his footstool, they shall be exalted together with him in glory. He distinctly told his disciples that they shared with him in his Father's love. "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." John xvii. 22, 23.

If we are the children of God, let us meditate on our high privileges that we may duly appreciate them, and that we may not, as hypocrites do, receive the grace of God in vain. If we value the exceeding riches of God's grace as we should, carnal pleasures will lose much of their power over us. You hardly expect that those who rejoice in God will run much after frivolities, vanities, revelries, and amusements, whether religious or secular. Indeed the thoughtless and ungodly so far understand this that they would be amazed if a man or woman eminent for piety would take a part in some gay revel even once.

And now, thoughtless sinners, will you still refuse the grace, that is, the good will of God? It is offered to you, and "we beseech you, in Christ's stead, be ye

reconciled to God." While you reject Christ you cannot know his love, whatever vain fancies you may have concerning his benevolence to his creatures. Pray to him to open your eyes that you may discern his kindness to his people.

DISCOURSE XVII.

SALVATION BY GRACE.

Eph. ii. 8-10: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

ALL the religious systems in the world may be grouped under two heads; those which promise salvation by works, and that which promises salvation by grace. The first head comprises all forms of Heathenism, Mohammedanism, Judaism, Popery, and other corruptions of Christianity; and the second comprises all the Evangelical Churches. The majority of those adhering to the latter, failing to understand the method of grace, rely upon their own works for salvation, so that hitherto, only a small proportion of the adult human race, as far as we can judge, assent to God's method of saving sinners, and close with it. In discussing this subject, I will consider the false theory

of the way of salvation relied on by so many, and the true plan devised by God.

I. Notice the false view of the way of salvation extensively entertained by men.

1. Observe that salvation by works agrees with our natural pride.

Our feelings are opposed to being entirely beholden to another for unmerited favours, so that the idea is repugnant to us. On this account sinners, awakened to a serious consideration of their relation to God and of their responsibilities to him, endeavour to merit his favour by their own works of self-denial and obedience. There is a deep-rooted feeling in their minds, that, if they make such recompense, as is in their power, to God and man for transgressions committed against them, and if they render obedience to the Divine law, God will bestow salvation upon them. Some think that their good deeds are sufficient for this purpose, and, entertaining considerable hope of eternal happiness on the ground of their own righteousness, die under this delusion. There are others, who, being somewhat more enlightened, and knowing that their works are not perfect, but relying on the general mercy of God, trust that he will overlook their defects, seeing that they sincerely, as they think, desire to do what they can to please him, and they consider that it would not be just to demand more. Seeing they are

doing their best, they hope that God will not demand any more. Though a complete salvation is offered gratuitously by God, yet unrenewed sinners cannot accept it, but cleave to their own works until they are slain by the law ; nor is it only ignorant Heathens and deluded Romanists that so act, but all Protestants as well, until they are spiritually quickened, and enlightened in the knowledge of Christ.

2. Natural wisdom despises God's method of salvation by grace. Mere human wisdom cannot see that such a way of saving sinners is at all adapted to promote morality and fit men for everlasting blessedness, and so "the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness." 1 Cor. i. 18. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God : for they are foolishness unto him : neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. ii. 14. In the early days of the Gospel the preaching of "Christ crucified" was "unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness." 1 Cor. i. 23. From that day to this the dark minds of men have looked upon God's plan as altogether inadequate to the production of so great a result as the moral restoration and salvation of sinners. Though the product of infinite wisdom, it is regarded as the idle dream of enthusiasts and fanatics. By his way of salvation God resolved to overthrow the devices of the devil, and confound the boasted wisdom of men. "For after

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that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." 1 Cor. i. 21. That human wisdom should not attain to the knowledge of the way of salvation is even necessary, so that the wise shall have no ground of boasting any more than the foolish. Indeed pride of wisdom is opposed to faith. "His soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith." Hab. ii. 4. "Knowledge puffs up." 1 Cor. viii. 1. Therefore the wisest men in the world must discover their utter ignorance before they accept God's salvation. The Holy Ghost lays them in the dust, and causes them to say: "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man." Prov. xxx. 2.

3. Human reason is opposed to salvation by grace. The stronger a natural man's reason is, so much the more does it stand between him and saving faith in Christ. He thinks that, seeing he is more intelligent in religious and moral principles than his neighbours, there is not the same necessity for him to be alarmed for himself, particularly when he is as virtuous, upright, and honourable as any of them, and in many ways superior to most, if not all of them. He considers some ignorant and dissipated fools among his acquaintances to be in great danger of perdition if they do not reform; but as for himself, he is altogether different, he thinks. In this way self-flattery stands between clear-headed men and Christ, and when the Holy Ghost

convinces them of sin, guilt, and just exposure to wrath, their reason presents to their minds such strong arguments against their coming to Christ that they argue with great subtlety against any exercise of faith by them. Among other things one who has been under sound gospel instruction says: "Seeing that my faith is not genuine if it be merely of myself, what then is the use of my trying to rest on Christ in my own strength? If I knew that my faith was produced by the Spirit I would gladly believe, but otherwise there is no use in trying." Such thoughts amount to this: "If I believe, I will believe; or if I knew I had faith, I would believe." Such is the confusion into which our own reason leads us. It is not as believers we come to Christ, but as lost sinners who are altogether destitute of every good thing. No one can be conscious of faith until he first comes to Christ. How can any one be conscious of an act until that act be performed? From these observations we see that a sinner is not saved by reason, but by grace.

4. Natural conscience cannot recognize God's method of salvation.

In our fallen condition, conscience is the best power in us; for though it is defiled, there is moral goodness in it; it speaks to us on God's behalf, points out our duty, reproves us for our sins, declares our guilt, and announces the punishment that we deserve; but it knows nothing of pardon of sin through faith in Christ; indeed it opposes faith with all its might.

Some people may think that, if they faithfully obey conscience, they will be saved. To this we say, however, that conscience will never lead any one to Christ, but away from him to duties and reformations. It understands the law, but it knows nothing of the gospel. Like the Jews it says: I "know that God spake" the law, but "as for" the gospel, I "know not whence" it is, John ix. 29. It can take cognizance of many sins, but it cannot see unbelief; indeed, it strengthens that sin against Christ, inasmuch as it drives the awakened sinner from faith to legal obedience. Because it regards believing in Christ as not at all commanded, it strenuously opposes it. To convince of unbelief is the work of the Spirit; for when he comes to a soul to work effectually "he will reprove him of sin because he believes not on" Christ, John xvi. 8, 9. An awakened conscience strongly opposes faith; it proclaims the wrath of God against the sins which justly deserve it, but it cannot point to the Saviour, nor cease from condemning until, sprinkled by the blood of Christ, it is purged from dead works.

From these observations we may see that salvation is not by works, nor by any of our natural powers; but it is hard to convince us of this truth.

II. Notice the true method of salvation. "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."

1. Observe that it is particular persons that are saved. "Ye."

It is agreed by all who profess the Christian religion that all men are not saved, but only some, and we have shown that these are not saved by works or anything in themselves, but by God; we therefore conclude that all, whom God intended to save, shall be saved, but no more. The result shall at last reveal the eternal purpose of God concerning them. Having given them to Christ in the covenant of redemption, in the fulness of time he sent him to give his life a ransom for them, and according to the terms of the covenant he sends the Holy Ghost to enable them to believe on Christ that they may partake of the redemption purchased by him.

2. We observe that they are saved from great evils, and put in possession of valuable privileges.

By nature they are guilty, condemned, and exposed to punishment, they are altogether corrupt, alienated from God in the spirit of their minds, and without any power to purify their own hearts, return to God, and practise holiness; but God having purposed to rescue them, in due time he calls them effectually unto salvation. When renewed by the Holy Ghost, they are justified, pardoned, and also constituted sons of God by adoption, wherein they receive a right to all the privileges of sons. By these acts of grace their relation to God being satisfactorily adjusted, a title to all blessings

is bestowed upon them. Then they "are the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what they shall be: but they know that, when he shall appear, they shall be like him; for they shall see him, as he is." 1 John iii. 2. In this world their salvation is not perfect, but merely begun. They are fully justified and adopted, but their sanctification and blessedness are not complete. God is, however, engaged to themselves, and to Christ on their behalf, to "perfect all that concern" them, and Christ will at last "present them to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but holy and without blemish." Eph. v. 27. In this life they are subject to such afflictions as cause them to "groan within themselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of their bodies." Rom. viii. 23. They are destined to be at last like Christ; for at the resurrection their bodies shall be like his glorious body. They shall in heaven share in his honours and blessedness as "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Rom. viii. 17.

3. Observe that the cause of their salvation is not their own works or merit, but grace. "For by grace are ye saved."

Grace means the favour of God to his creatures, conferred on whom he pleases, not on account of their merit, but of his own good will. This is clear from various passages of Scripture. I "will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom

I will show mercy." Ex. xxxiii. 10. From this the apostle infers that salvation "is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." Rom. ix. 16. "The kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." Titus iii. 4-6. The word, "grace," is used to mean both the favour of God and the effects produced in us thereby; but the former is to be understood here rather than the latter. It was by an act of his grace that God from eternity chose his people in Christ to holiness, and predestinated them to adoption and glory. To carry out this purpose of grace, God, in the fulness of time, sent forth his Son to redeem them, and he applies the redemption to them by his Spirit. "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." 2 Tim. i. 9. By "grace" we understand the favour of the three Persons of the Godhead. The Father, of his grace, gave his Son to die for us: "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Gal. iv. 4, 5. "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the

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angels, for the suffering of death . . . ; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." Heb. ii. 9. The Son, of his grace, came for the same purpose: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." 2 Cor. viii. 9. The Holy Ghost, of his grace, works effectually in us, and is, therefore, called "the Spirit of grace." Heb. x. 29. "Grace be unto you from the seven Spirits which are before his throne." Rev. i. 4. It is surely a marvellous thing that God loved us from everlasting, sent his Son to give his life a ransom for us, and at the proper time sends his Spirit to call us effectually that we should be made willing to accept a title to eternal life. This was done, not on account of our merit, but of good will. We are "justified freely by his grace." Rom. iii. 24. The moment a sinner believes on Christ the whole of this salvation is his, nor shall he merely *be* saved, but he *is* saved already from condemnation and the dominion of sin. Whether his faith be strong or weak, his salvation is equally certain; the difference is only in his enjoyment of it, but not in its reality.

4. The instrument whereby salvation is received is faith. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."

It may be asked, What is here said to be the gift of God? Is it salvation, or faith? In reality both are

gifts of God, and perhaps on that account the expression is purposely ambiguous; but, at the same time, the words, "and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God," appear to refer more naturally to "faith" than to "saved." There is nothing in us that can receive the gift of salvation but faith only; our good works cannot enable us to accept it, neither can any of the powers of our mind while in our natural state. The apostle says: "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." Rom. iii. 24. Our redemption is of the favour of God, but it had to be purchased by Jesus Christ as our Mediator. It was, however, of the grace of the Father that Christ was appointed to do this, and of his own grace he undertook the work. The purchase of our redemption does not lessen the grace of God therein, but enhances it, and the salvation wrought by Christ is applied to us in a way that makes grace conspicuous. If there had been some native ability in us to receive it, the accepting of it would not be by grace, but by that something in us, and the application of redemption would be due to ourselves. If the case were so believers would have cause to boast of the act of accepting it. To prevent this, God, by the agency of the Holy Ghost, brings into existence in us a principle that was not in us by nature, so that we are enabled thereby to know Christ, and, by the newly-

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created faith, rest upon him for salvation. No one can accept the salvation offered in the gospel unless he is quickened to spiritual life whereby he exercises faith in Christ.

5. In this manifestation of his grace God had in view that the saved should abound in good works to the praise of his glory. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." This is the evidence of our salvation, for if we have accepted it by faith, we walk in good works. If we believe in Christ we love him and keep his commandments. If we "are risen with Christ we seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God," and mortify the flesh with its corrupt inclinations.

Sinners, God offers a gratuitous salvation to you; not only the redemption purchased by Christ, but the Holy Ghost to work faith in you that by him you may be united to Christ by faith, and saved by grace. It is your part to accept the gift thus freely offered without attempting to give any price in return. As your virtues are defiled by sin, God will not receive them as a satisfaction for your transgressions, for he "is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity."
Hab. i. 13.

DISCOURSE XVIII.

ALIENS MADE NIGH BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST.

Eph. ii. 11-13: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

IN this chapter the apostle set before the Ephesians their state when they were "dead in trespasses and sins," living in wickedness, "and were by nature the children of wrath even as others"; and stated that it was because of the "great love wherewith" God "loved them, they were quickened, exalted, and enthroned together with Christ." It was not on account of their good works or merit that he did these things for them, but of his good will. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." This being so, he urged them to remember that they were once far from God, and separated from his people; "But that now in Christ Jesus they who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

In considering this happy change of relation to God and his people, I will direct your attention to those who "are made nigh," through whom they "are made nigh," and the duties enjoined on those whose relation is thus changed.

I. Notice those who are made nigh.

They are such as in time past were lost, without Christ, aliens and strangers, without hope, and without God. It is reasonable that, to kindle their gratitude and to produce humility, such, when made nigh, should remember what they had been.

1. The Ephesians were "Gentiles in the flesh, who were called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands."

This is a brief description of their condition before they believed on Christ. They were uncircumcised heathens, not merely by birth, but spiritually as well. The majority of the Jews, and since, of professing Christians, though circumcised in the flesh as in the case of the former, and baptized as in the case of the latter, have been heathens in heart. Before the coming of Christ uncircumcision declared that those in that condition were not the people of God, as the want of Christian baptism does since the death and resurrection of Christ. It is true that there have been both uncircumcised and unbaptized who have been true believers, but the non-performance of one or other of these scriptural

rites upon them declared them to be heathens. As both were appointed by God as seals of his covenant, to have been without them was a serious defect and misfortune. From this consideration we may infer the propriety of the baptism of the infants of believers. If the people of God were more distinct from the world and the ordinance strictly confined to them, the effect upon the ungodly would be salutary; but at present we can hardly distinguish the church from the world, because the former conforms so much to the latter.

2. The Ephesians were before their conversion "without Christ."

To be "without Christ" means more than to be uncircumcised heathens destitute of the knowledge of God, and without any expectation of the Messiah. As Christ is the only Redeemer of men, to be without him is to be without redemption, reconciliation to God, justification, pardon, and all spiritual blessings. Such being under condemnation, are children of wrath. To possess Christ is the sum of all blessedness, but to be without him is the sum of all misery.

3. The Ephesians were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise."

They were separate from the people of God, as they were not citizens of the holy commonwealth, but outside of it, in an attitude of hostility to itself and its King. It is granted that many of its citizens were not

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true men but traitors ; but the heathens were declared enemies to its Supreme Ruler. Many are now in the kingdom of Christ on earth who are not at all loyal subjects to its sovereign, and though they enjoy its external privileges, they have no real right to them. They do not know its spiritual advantages, nor do they desire them, because they are not congenial to them. The heathens were "strangers from the covenants of promise," as well as aliens ; they knew neither the various covenants that God made with the fathers, nor the great promise of redemption ; and, therefore, felt no interest in either. As they were not included in the covenants, their condition was deplorable, for their future prospects were without a ray of light to cheer them.

4. We, therefore, observe that they were without "hope."

The promise of God is the only ground of hope men can have in this world, so that those who have not the one cannot have the other. This then is the sad state of the heathens, and also of all who have not come by faith to Christ to lay hold of the hope set before us ; for as it is in Christ that the promises of God are "yea and amen," they have no significance to those who are not in him.

5. The Ephesians were "without God in the world."

They were not professed atheists, for they wor-

shipped many gods, and, except a few philosophers, they believed that there was one Supreme Deity, but being destitute of the knowledge of the true God, they served those who were no gods. They lived "in wickedness" as all do, who, even in Christian lands, have not savingly submitted to Christ and trusted in him. The alienation of the heathens from the church, in this as in former ages, involves a similar alienation from God, and the same is true of all who stand outside its pale. By this is not meant all who are not communicants, but those who generally disregard the ordinances of the gospel; for such have no more hope than the heathens.

6. But the Ephesians were made nigh.

God in his own time sent the gospel to them, and through the mighty operations of the Holy Ghost a goodly number of them believed, so that "many came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men; and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." Acts xix. 18-20. In this way the Ephesians "were made nigh."

II. This leads me to notice him through whom they "were made nigh." "But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

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1. They were in Christ by election.

In the preceding chapter we learn that God chose the Ephesians in Christ "before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love." He chose Christ to be the Mediator, and in choosing him he chose all who were to be made nigh by him. Though in the choice and purpose of God they were in Christ from eternity, yet when they came forth into actual existence they were aliens and strangers in their minds until they were actually made nigh.

Under the old dispensation God dwelt in the temple, so that those who had access to the courts of his house on occasions of solemn worship were his people. Israel was near, but as the Gentiles were far off, they had no liberty of access to God, not even through the priests, until they became Israelites. When the priests came into the presence of God with the blood of the sacrifices, it was on behalf of the holy people only that they made an atonement with it. "Near" and "far off" are used in Scripture to designate Jews and Gentiles. "Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far." Isa. xlix. 1. "I create the fruit of the lips; peace, peace, to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the LORD." Isa. lvii. 19. "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off." Acts ii. 39.

2. It was through Christ's intervention that the obstacle to their being "made nigh" was removed.

Seeing sin stood as an impassable barrier between men and God, no sinner could be "made nigh" unless it had been taken out of the way. Christ, by the Father's appointment, undertook the great task, and the iniquity of us all was laid upon him. By his obedient and sufferings unto death he opened a way to God, and by his Spirit he induces sinners to draw near to him.

3. The means, whereby Christ made access to God possible, was his blood. "Ye are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

"Without shedding of blood there is no remission." When Moses ratified the covenant between God and Israel at Mount Sinai, "He took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the covenant which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." Heb. ix. 19-23. As under the Old Testament the people were "made

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nigh" by the blood of bulls and goats, so are we "made nigh" by the blood of Christ, "who by one offering perfected for ever them that are sanctified; for he has obtained eternal redemption for us," having been "once offered to bear the sins of many."

III. Notice the duty enjoined on those who are "made nigh." "Remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."

1. Recollection of their past state will help believers to magnify the grace of God.

The apostle well remembered his own state before he became a follower of Christ, and this recollection caused him to admire the grace of God in having mercy upon him. "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ; of whom I am chief." 1 Tim. i. 12-15.

2. The remembrance of their miserable condition before they were "made nigh" strengthens the faith of God's people.

A clear recollection of their natural state is well calculated to show believers their helplessness. Before they were born again they had no ability to think one good thought, they had no holy impulses or aims, no power to do anything to advance their own salvation or promote the glory of God ; and though the salvation which God provided was freely offered in the gospel, there was no inclination in them to accept it : "for by grace they are saved through faith ; and that, not of themselves, it is the gift of God." Though God has provided a remedy, man has neither hand nor heart to take it ; so that, if left to himself, he will certainly perish. The consideration of this is well fitted both to humble believers, and also to stir up their gratitude to God. Besides this, it is well to remember that they were not justified by the works of the law, but by faith. When they first rested on Christ they discovered that all their obedience came short of what the law demanded, and that even if they did obey it perfectly for the future, that would not atone for past sins. They are then convinced that they are saved "not of works, lest they should boast" ; but that they are God's "workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto

good works." These reflections lead them to remember that it was as ungodly sinners they first rested on Christ. The realization of this truth is fitted to help them when distressed by a sense of pollution, unfaithfulness, guilt, and deadness, to come again to Christ, as lost souls in whom there is no good thing. When alarmed by a view of their ungodliness, and ready to conclude that they are not subjects of grace, let them remember that it was for such as they that Christ died, and that it was when they looked upon themselves as altogether sinful they first obtained relief from their anxiety through faith in Christ. We err when we try to aid our faith by looking for some good things in ourselves under the misapprehension that, if we had such, we would believe; but faith takes no cognizance of our good things, but of Christ and the promise of God who justifies the ungodly for his sake. This retrospect of their state by nature encourages believers to perseverance in the exercise of faith. Perhaps one lived years in ungodliness; but when he was by the Holy Ghost convinced of guilt and exposure to wrath he was led to Christ. If a believer is struggling against temptations or unbelief, let him wait upon God as he did before, and relief will come in due time. If we cleave to Christ, he will not cast us off, however desperate our case may appear to be.

3. A believer's love to Christ is increased by his looking back on his former state. The woman that

anointed Christ's feet in the Pharisee's house loved much because she was forgiven much. Paul's faith and love to Christ was much strengthened by a consideration of his kindness to a sinner so unworthy as he was. God recommends to his people to "look to the rock whence they are hewn, and to the hole of the rock whence they are digged." Isa. li. 1. The people of Israel were commanded to consider their origin once every year, and to "say before the LORD" on the feast of the first fruits: "A Syrian ready to perish was my father; and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous." Deut. xxvi. 5.

4. This retrospect is fitted to produce godly sorrow.

Some may think that when one obtains pardon he has no occasion to think any more of past sins. This is contrary to sound experience; for it is when one realizes the kindness and love of God in forgiving his sins that true grief fills his soul; and this agrees with the Scriptures. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." Jer.

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xxxi. 18, 19. "I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: that thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God." Ez. xvi. 63. The sentiments of those who maintain that no believer has cause for repentance or need of prayer for pardon are contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture.

5. This recollection of past sins makes believers zealous for God. The remembrance of his persecution of the disciples of Christ filled Paul's mind with gratitude to God for his mercy in forgiving his great sins, and animated him with zeal in his service. Regarding himself as more unworthy than all men, and stimulated by his appreciation of the greatness of God's mercy to him, he laboured more than all the apostles. "I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, but I laboured more abundantly than they all." 1 Cor. xv. 9, 10. That he resisted the gospel of Christ in his early days deeply grieved him when he was enlightened by the Holy Spirit; nor was his repentance a temporary but a permanent affection which acted in him with power to urge him to glorify God with gratitude. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed

with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish or without spot," "pass the time of your sojourning here in fear," and "see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." 1 Peter i. 18, 19, 17, 22.

6. This recollection is fitted to encourage believers to pray for the conversion of the most unpromising sinners.

If such as are doing something in this intercessory work feel discouraged, the remembrance of their own stubbornness in the days of their disobedience may well urge them to persevere in prayer for sinners in whose welfare they are interested. Seeing it was Divine power that overcame themselves, they should continue to ask God to subdue others to himself.

Let sinners reflect on their sad and perilous condition; for they are without Christ and God, nor are they true citizens in the commonwealth of Israel, but slaves in the kingdom of Satan. As God may at any moment summon them to receive their doom, they should pray to him for pardon that they may be translated from darkness to light and from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God's dear Son.

DISCOURSE XIX.

CHRIST OUR PEACE.

Eph. ii. 14-17: "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh."

IN this passage there is a seeming difficulty which it is well to clear at the outset. From the connection of the fifteenth and sixteenth verses some may suppose that Christ first of all "abolished in his flesh the enmity" between Jews and Gentiles, "even the law of commandments contained in ordinances," to make of both "one new man," that then "he might reconcile" the two "unto God by the cross." This view of the case might be made to appear plausible; but the most satisfactory explanation is that which agrees with the actual facts of the case, and regards the two verses as containing distinct statements of great acts of which the second named was performed before the first mentioned, because it is the meritorious cause of it. Christ first reconciled both Jews and Gentiles unto God by

the cross, and thereby "abolished in his flesh the enmity" between them, that is, "the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of both one new man." As there was a double enmity; between men and God, and between men themselves, a twofold reconciliation was necessary.

In the passage there are two great truths to which our attention will be directed:—The reconciliation, and its proclamation to men.

I. Notice the reconciliation.

Reconciliation implies the previous existence of enmity between the parties reconciled; and that, in order to accomplish it, two things must be done: Firstly, the enmity must be removed, and, secondly, friendship must be established. The parties here referred to are God and men, Jews and Gentiles.

1. Observe that God is reconciled to men.

Certain people oppose the view that God was reconciled; they base their objection on the glorious truth that it was of his love that God devised the scheme of redemption and sent his Son to save sinners. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John iii. 16. They say that man needed to be reconciled to God, seeing his mind was full of enmity to him, but that God did not hate man. This view overlooks some

important facts in the case, and seems to incline towards Socinianism, or at least towards the moral theory of the atonement. It overlooks the demerits of sin, and the tenor of Scripture with regard to God's judicial treatment of it. To say that God hates sin, but not the sinner, sounds like a contradiction in terms; sin has no possible existence but in the creature that commits it. When the act is done the agent, being necessarily involved therein, becomes responsible for it, so that he is bound over to the punishment justly due, and which a holy God will certainly inflict upon himself or upon another in his stead. As thus God is judicially angry with the sinner, he will not be reconciled to him unless his wrath is pacified by a sufficient atonement. When in the Word of God we read of his wrath against wicked men, we must not surely regard these solemn expressions as destitute of all meaning, or as having only some meaning of which we cannot have the least conception. They have a meaning, and a terrible one it is. "God is angry with the wicked every day." Ps. vii. 11. "Thou, even thou, art to be feared; and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry." Ps. lxxvi. 7. "O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me." Isa. xiii. 1. "These six things doth the LORD hate; yea, seven are an abomination unto him: a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that

deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren." Prov. vi. 16-19. Here we see that God not only hates wickedness, but also the doers of it. "Because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." Eph. v. 6. "He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." Rev. xix. 15. As it was necessary that the judicial anger of God, the Supreme Judge of the universe, should be pacified, so man's enmity to him must be overcome, and on the ground of the satisfaction rendered to Divine justice by the Lord Jesus Christ, God can pardon sinners, send his Spirit to renew them, open their understandings to know his loving-kindness as displayed by the work of Christ as it is revealed in the gospel, and thus he destroys the enmity of their hearts against him. In this way everlasting friendship between God and his people is established.

But there is another enmity referred to, namely, that between Jews and Gentiles. Christ, by abolishing "in his flesh" the cause of this enmity, "the law of commandments contained in ordinances," broke "down the middle wall of partition between" them. This enmity, which was the most bitter that the world ever saw, was mutual, but more malicious, if possible, on the part of the Jews. To express its intensity, the apostle not merely says that they were enemies, but

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that there was enmity between them, an irreconcilable feeling of hatred. It was an active hatred that was roused whenever they saw, heard, or thought of each other. It was an inveterate dislike that existed two thousand years before Christ came to abolish the cause of it. Commencing with the separation of Abraham from all other nations, it showed itself in the malicious treatment of Isaac by the Philistines when they deprived him of the wells that he and his father dug. Simeon and Levi, the sons of Jacob, manifested it in a fiercer form when they treacherously slew the Shechemites. This hostile feeling increased in bitterness as time advanced, so that in the days of the Saviour it rose to such a height that the Jews would not even eat with the Gentiles. This dislike to all other people grew so much at last in the minds of the Jews that the apostle said concerning them that they were "contrary to all men." 1 Thes. ii. 15. Though the cause of the enmity was abolished, yet it has continued in the hearts of the Jewish people unto this day, except in case of such of them as had it destroyed in them by the Spirit of God. At this time it exists as bitter as ever in the hearts of unbelieving Jews, and the Gentiles sometimes very cruelly retaliate. Seeing that the foundation of reconciliation is firmly laid, all, that God intended, shall be brought into the union, to be joined in the bonds of everlasting peace; and not only shall Jews and Gentiles be united in friendship, but the rivalries of Christian

sects shall yet yield to the blessed influence of gospel peace and brotherhood. That desirable end shall be secured, not by disregarding any truth, or holding it loosely, but by increase in light and charity.

2. The Mediator or peacemaker is Christ. "For he is our peace."

That the enmity between the elect and God, and that between themselves might be destroyed, Christ took both upon himself. In the eternal agreement between himself and the Father, he and they were reckoned as one. As both "were made one" in the covenant of redemption, Christ undertook to answer for their enmity against God, "that he might reconcile" them unto God "in one body by the cross"; he also undertook to abolish their enmity to each other by satisfying Divine justice for it, and by fulfilling the significance of "the law of commandments contained in ordinances." Thus we see that the death of Christ on the cross was a sacrifice to reconcile us to God, and also to one another. As he became responsible for our enmity to God and to our brethren, and suffered for it, we are bound to make peace with God, and also to cultivate the spirit of forgiveness that we may be at peace among ourselves. To cherish a vindictive spirit against others is a sin against Christ, inasmuch as it depreciates the value of his sufferings for them; for it is our duty to suppose that he bore the enmity, not only of those who profess to be his disciples, but of

any one who may injure us ; for if Christ endured the punishment of his sins, I have no right to inflict punishment upon him.

Covenants of reconciliation and friendship were in Old Testament times ratified by sacrifices wherein the victims were divided into two parts, between which the parties to the engagement passed and invoked the vengeance of God upon themselves by a similar death if they violated the covenant. The formula was :— "God do so to me, and more also." In God's covenant with Abraham there was something of this nature done. In answer to the patriarch's request of a proof whereby he might know that he should inherit the land, God said unto him : " Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she-goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle dove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another ; but the birds divided he not. . . . And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces." Gen. xv. 8-17. As men did in similar transactions, God condescended to cause the emblems of his presence to pass between the divided sacrifice. In the days of Zedekiah, he, the nobles, and the wealthy among the people, entered into a mutual engagement to liberate their poor brethren whom they held as bondsmen, but afterwards, in viola-

tion of the agreement, they forced them back to servitude. For this violation of a solemn covenant God, expressive of his displeasure, said: "I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof." Jer. xxxiv. 18. Though that ancient ceremonial is not observed now, our covenant with God is solemnly ratified by us in baptism, and at the Lord's table, and it binds us with equal force to maintain peace with one another as well as with God; for in the Lord's Supper we eat and drink together the symbols of the slain body of Christ whereby the enmity was destroyed. It is therefore wicked in us to revive that which he slew by his own death.

II. But notice the proclamation of the reconciliation. "And he came and preached peace to you which were a-far off, and to them that were nigh."

Christ, by pacifying Divine wrath, laid the foundation of everlasting peace, and this he announced to men. This is the glorious declaration of the gospel. "On earth peace, good will toward men." "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. v. 1. When Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, and reconciled us to God, he came and proclaimed peace.

1. Before Christ came in the flesh, on the credit of his engagement to expiate for sin, he preached peace during the Old Testament dispensation by promises, types, and prophetic announcements. In the course of these ages many rejoiced in the gracious declaration, and in reliance on the faithfulness of God, they believed that a satisfactory foundation of peace, to be laid in due time, was planned, and they were reconciled in mind to God. As they really, though dimly, saw the coming peace-maker, they trusted in him. "Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad." John viii. 56.

2. Christ personally proclaimed peace during his public ministry on earth.

He had full confidence in his success in his great undertaking. In the Scriptures he had many promises from the Father of power to sustain his human nature in the conflict with death, while bearing the penalty of the enmity and its fruits. Having therefore full assurance of accomplishing his work, he preached the glad tidings to men, and commanded them to become his disciples. Though the majority of his countrymen refused the peace which he offered, yet those who believed were reconciled to God.

3. It was, however, after he came back from the grave that he preached peace with greater clearness than it was ever done before. He commissioned the apostles to go into the whole world to preach the

gospel to all nations ; but to begin at Jerusalem, to whose Jewish inhabitants, who were nigh, they were commanded to make the first offer, then to witness for him "in Samaria, and unto the utmost ends of the earth." This work has been carried on since the ascension of Christ unto this day ; for his servants have proclaimed peace, as directed, through the nations, and many have heard the report with gladness, though others, who refused to be reconciled, treated the matter with indifference. It is true that, to this day, not a few populous countries have remained in ignorance of the great transaction, either because they have not heard the joyful tidings, or because they would not admit Christ's heralds into their territories ; for such is the power of the devil over men that he shuts them up against the gospel by their own enmity to God, which produces various prejudices in their minds. Many nations, who received the gospel, afterwards so corrupted its simplicity, that for it they substituted superstitious fables which are so congenial to them that they are loath to part with these vanities. This great enterprise has hitherto been mightily opposed by the powers of darkness, but the church is encouraged by promises and Divine providence to persevere therein : for it is declared that Christ "shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth," and that "the kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents ; the kings of Sheba and

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Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him." Ps. lxxii. 8, 10, 11. The "stone cut out of the mountain without hands" will break the kingdoms of the world to pieces, and will go on increasing until it shall fill the whole earth; and it is a settled purpose of God to bind Satan for a thousand years wherein he shall not be able to deceive the nations, and the saints shall reign with Christ during that happy period. Though the Jews are at this day as bitter against Christ and his followers as their ancestors were in the days of his flesh, yet they will, in God's time, receive the message of peace with repentance; for "they shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for an only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." Zech. xii. 10. "I would not, brethren," says Paul, "that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved." Rom. xi. 25, 26.

Practical Observations:

1. Seeing that such a provision for a reconciliation has been made, believers should so highly appreciate it as to cause them to watch diligently against anything that tends to withdraw their affections from God, to

the disturbance of their friendship with him. If, he, by the sacrifice of his own Son, is reconciled to them, they should be so reconciled to him in the spirit of their mind, as to cultivate an affectionate regard for him. To maintain proper evangelical feelings toward him they must carefully guard against alliances with his enemies, nor be "conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of their mind, that they may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Rom. xii. 1, 2.

2. Believers should cherish such benevolent feelings toward Jews and Heathens as will urge them to use means to make the reconciliation known to them by the proclamation of the gospel of peace amongst them. If we made peace with God, we rejoice in it, and desire that all men, by means of the gospel, should accept it. Christ's command to us is to send them the good news, and we are bound to preach the glad tidings to all nations, either in person, or by such aid as we can give. This matter should be always so near our hearts that it would always occupy our thoughts so lively as to find a place in our prayers, and cause us to use our means to send the glad tidings abroad.

3. If we appreciate the peace of God, we cultivate peace among ourselves, so as to be ready to forgive one another our mutual offences. If we have this generous spirit, it is a clear evidence of our forgiveness by God, and of being at peace with him.

4. God offers peace to you, sinners. Will you accept it, or do you prefer to stand out as enemies? Consider the perils of your position. God can easily destroy you, but he has no desire to do so. He says: "Fury is not in me: who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me." Isa. xxvii. 4, 5.

DISCOURSE XX.

ACCESS TO GOD.

Eph. ii. 18: "For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

THE context speaks of a double reconciliation made by the blood of Christ; a reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles to each other, and of both to God. As the ceremonial dispensation confined the worship of God to the Jews to the exclusion of the Gentiles, it caused bitter enmity between them; and, both being under the curse of the violated law, there was enmity between them and God. Christ, by his death, removed these causes of alienation; he reconciled sinners to God, "and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between" Jews and Gentiles, "having abolished

in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." By his death Christ abolished the old mode of worship, and took away the curse of the law. By slaying the cause of enmity between God and sinners, and also between Jews and Gentiles, he procured for both an equal right to draw near to God in solemn gospel worship, so that Gentile believers "are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God," and "are builded together" with the Jews "for an habitation of God through the Spirit." From these statements we learn that believers of all nations have the same valuable privileges, including a right of access to God in divine worship. We will then consider the nature and glory of the worship of God, how and by whom we have access to him, and the Person who directs us therein.

I. Notice the nature and glory of the worship of God.

It is a natural feeling in the human mind that the service of God should be beautiful, and hence, in every

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age, those who regarded it as their duty to conduct religious ceremonies have celebrated them with what they considered the most becoming propriety. Indeed, we have ground to suspect that devotional services which are without comely order are not in accordance with the mind of God. When Divine worship is mixed with incongruous elements and accompanied with disorderly practices, we regard the exercises as profanity. Through ignorance of the beauty of holiness, natural men invented many rites wherewith to adorn the worship of God, and imposed their observance upon others. God himself is the proper judge of what is comely in his own service, nor has any one else the right of enjoining on others religious practices which he has not authorized.

1. We observe that gospel worship is glorious on account of the Divine Persons concerned therein.

Believers have communion with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost in true spiritual worship. "Through him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father." This is the general order of the worship of God; and its comeliness lies in a conformity to his revealed will. He, who, by the gracious operations of the Spirit prompting him, comes to God the Father in the name of Christ, in dependence on his merits and intercession, performs a glorious service wherewith God is pleased, because he is honoured thereby. The neglect of any of these essentials renders our devotions

deformed and offensive, no matter with what amount of meretricious ornaments invented by human ingenuity they may be embellished. If we do not come unto the Father by Jesus Christ in the strength of the Holy Ghost, we transgress the great gospel canon, nor is there any spiritual decency in our service even if we had the eloquence of the greatest orators, and adorned the accompaniments of the service with costly decorations set up with the greatest taste. Worship is an act of the soul in which the body is subservient to the mind. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." John iv. 24. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment." Mat. xxii. 37, 38. Spiritual worship receives its glory from the objects of the soul's exercises, and these are the three persons of the Trinity. We come for acceptance to the Father, by faith in Christ for admission, and in reliance on the Holy Ghost for assistance. The Father receives us, the Son presents us, and the Spirit guides us.

2. Observe that gospel worship is glorious in its nature, because in it we have access to God. "Let us draw near with a true heart," is the direction given to us, and we are encouraged to enter with "boldness into the holiest." Heb. x. 22. When the law was proclaimed from Mount Sinai, and the legal worship was instituted, the people were commanded to stand afar

off on pain of instant death. "Thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it : whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death : there shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through." Ex. xix. 12, 13. The people were excluded from the tabernacle while the holy service was performed. They stood without in the court when the priest went into the sanctuary with the blood of the sacrifices, and to burn incense. On the great day of atonement all the people and priests were excluded from the sanctuary while the high priest was in the holy of holies in the presence of God. Direct access to the Father came by the gospel dispensation, so that through Christ we come to him by the Spirit. There is now no interposition of veils, carnal ordinances, or human priests, but we have a new and living way opened for us into the holiest of all, and a great friend to present us to the Father. The phrase, "have access," might be rendered, "have a leading by the hand." This is done by our Great High Priest Jesus Christ, who has all power and influence in the most holy place. "He is able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by him." Heb. vii. 25. He takes the worshipper by the hand, and presents him to God, to receive all that he purchased for him, and it shall be freely granted to him in the way that shall be most

beneficial to the recipient. He is received into friendship with God, as a son, and obtains a title to all blessings. This access to God through Christ by the Spirit is made permanent to all who sincerely worship him. Believers are not ordered to stand off at a distance, but encouraged to come nigh with boldness.

3. In gospel worship we have access to God himself.

It is surely no small part of the glory of the service of God that we have access to the eternal Father. To be admitted on terms of friendship into the presence of a person of high rank among men is considered an honour, what glory must it therefore be to be permitted to come into the presence of the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, and to have this privilege, when once granted, established for ever? Under the Old Testament, when the worship of God was celebrated in all its splendour, the worshippers came directly, not to him, but to some visible sign or symbol of his presence—such as the temple, the ark, and the mercy seat on which rested the cloud of glory, and some of these none, but the high priest once a year, was permitted to approach, or even to see. "The way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest; whereas under the gospel it is laid open to all believers, and even sinners are invited to come to God by it through Christ.

We are permitted to come to God as a father, not

only as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, but as our Father. As such he sits on the throne of grace to dispense grace and mercy, in his kindness to all who come to him in the name of his Son Jesus Christ; for he is appointed High Priest over the house of God, nor is he such "as cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but" one who "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." So we are encouraged to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Heb. iv. 15, 16. When under the old dispensation God appeared to his people, it was in such terrible majesty that, overwhelmed with fear, they "removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die." Ex. xx. 18, 19. By this dreadful representation of God as the object of worship, they were kept in bondage all their days; but now believers are encouraged to approach him with confidence as children to their father. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Rom. viii. 14, 15.

II. Notice how, and by whom, the right of access to God is procured. "For through him we have access unto the Father."

1. Observe that this right was purchased for us by Christ; and much of the glory of gospel worship arises from this fact. Of old the people of God had access only to the symbols of his presence by the high priest, who, representing them, came to the presence of God only once a year, whereas the way unto God through Christ is always open to us. The Son of God, our High Priest, gave his soul a ransom for us, satisfied justice by obeying the law and suffering its penalty for us; and thus met all demands upon us, so that he reconciled us to God. On this account "we are accepted in" him. Eph. i. 6. "In all things he was made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." Heb. ii. 17. On this account "we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." Rom. v. 2. This privilege procured for the saints is no small part of the purchase made by the precious blood of Christ; and it is a blessing so costly that all the wealth in the world and all the worth of angels could not buy it. If on entering the most splendid edifice for religious worship on earth you have sufficient skill, you can estimate its value, and that of its decorations; for the whole was purchased by money or its equivalent. The most ignorant and fanatical devotee in the world will grant that this is the case, so he who has abundance of worldly wealth may set up the most gorgeous service

of this kind, and erect a splendid structure to perform it in; but all the essential parts of the worship offered to God by believers are bought by the blood of the Son of God. Access to God could be obtained at no less cost, nor could the universe produce another price that could purchase it. In their ignorance and superstition men may "lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith" to set up an ornate ritual of worship; they may employ the highest genius to compose its music, and hire the most expert artistes to render its strains and harmonies in the most impressive manner, but in all this there is no spiritual glory. In the sight of God and heavenly minded men it is only a ghastly carcase full of rotteness, and all the more odious that it is dressed out in gaudy trappings and tawdry decorations. There is more glory and comeliness in the believing prayer of the most obscure saint on earth than in the gross amount of all the carnal worship and religious rites in the world, with all the showy ornaments whereby they are embellished.

2. Christ opened, prepared, and consecrated for us a way of access to God.

Though justice was satisfied, a propitiation made, and the favour of God procured, if a way to it was not opened we might say, There is water in abundance, but "the well is deep," and we have "nothing to draw with"; acceptance is purchased, but if there is no way to come unto God, what avails it? Christ has not left

the matter in this sad condition, but opened "a new and living way, which he has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." Heb. x. 20. When Thomas said that he did not know the way to God, Christ replied: "I am the way: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." John xiv. 6. It is by Christ only that we can draw near to God, but in coming to him we must have his blood sprinkled on our conscience. Without this, sin, Satan, and the law, will stop us; but the blood will force them to give way. When, as is often the case, believers cannot show this token, they are interrupted, so that they have to pass the time in perplexity and misery; but as soon as they can plead the sufferings and death of Christ, they obtain enlargement, confidence, peace, and joy.

3. Observe that Christ himself has gone before us to make every necessary preparation for our access and acceptance. "We have an High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." Heb. iv. 14. He has gone into heaven as our "forerunner" to declare before God that believers are coming to him in solemn acts of worship, and to secure for them a gracious reception. This is a glorious encouragement to sin-troubled believers and poor penitents. Christ is before us in the presence of God, waiting to procure all blessings for us when we draw near. Such is his kindness that the more he is employed the more delighted he is. The more his people apply to him, the more

honoured he is ; nor does he grow weary in his intercessory labours.

III. But notice the Person who animates and directs us in our access to God. "We have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

The Lord Jesus Christ promised to send his Spirit to enable his followers to discharge every duty enjoined upon them in the word of God. The Spirit and the word agree in this : the latter commands nothing that the former is not given to support in the performance of it, nor does he enable us to do anything that is not made known in the word. Fanatics may think otherwise, but their notions are delusions. The Spirit gives believers knowledge, grace, and ability to perform duties, and the more cheerful their obedience the greater becomes their capacity for further light and peace.

1. Observe that the Spirit enables the saints to discover the mind of God concerning his worship and the way of access to the Father.

Christ promised his disciples that, when the Spirit should come as the Comforter, he would "guide them into all truth," because he is "the Spirit of truth." John xvi. 13. The apostle John, after years of experience of the operations of the Spirit on his own soul in enlightening his mind and directing his conduct, says to believers : "Ye have an unction from the Holy One,

and ye know all things." 1 John ii. 20. He directs in duty, and preserves from error. "The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it has taught you, ye shall abide in him." 1 John ii. 27. He causes believers to attend to the mind of Christ as it is revealed in the word. He makes them diligent in its study, and in practising the knowledge that they obtain. You cannot believe that a man has the Spirit of Christ who is not a student of the Bible, and who is not honestly resolved to do the will of God according to the directions of his word. It is true that restless spirits, some of whom are sincere, perform, as religious and moral duties, things that God has not commanded at all, but in these they are not guided by the Holy Ghost, but by fancy and an unenlightened conscience. When professors of religion neglect the worship of God and plain moral duties, you cannot say that they are led by the Spirit, or even subjects of his gracious operations.

2. The Spirit enables believers to approach God with liberty and holy reverence.

He reveals God to them in the face of Jesus Christ; and enables them to discern what "no eye hath seen, nor ear heard, neither entered into the heart of man," but by his own illumination, and makes them satisfied with the provision of grace. He is in them

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as "the Spirit of grace and supplication." He shows them their own sins, defects, and wants, and prompts them to go to God in the name of Christ. Without his gracious working on their minds they would not know their own necessities, but he teaches them all things, and makes "intercession for them with groanings that cannot be uttered."

What then, do you think, sinners, of the provisions of the gospel and of access to the Father? You may not now desire these blessings, but when distress comes, to whom will you apply for help? If you continue to the end to slight the favour of God, then when you "call upon" him, he "will not answer." Do not delay to put yourselves in Christ's hand that he may introduce you to God, and procure all needed blessings for you.

DISCOURSE XXI.

THE CITIZENS OF HEAVEN.

Eph. ii. 19: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

BY the reconciliation made by Christ he slew the enmity between men and God and between Jews and Gentiles, so that "both have access by one Spirit

unto the Father," and the Gentiles are now "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Being formerly "strangers and foreigners," they stood in the same relation to the commonwealth of Israel that we do to a foreign state. We may be permitted to pass through it, or even to reside in it and receive its hospitality; but we have no voice in its government; and, except as mercenaries, we cannot be employed in its public service. To obtain a full right to the honours of citizenship we must be naturalized and made to swear allegiance to its government. The relation of sinners to the Kingdom of God is analogous to this: they are aliens, who, to obtain its freedom, must renounce the authority of "the prince of this world," and swear allegiance to the King of heaven.

1. Notice the position of men before they become citizens of the kingdom of heaven. They are "strangers and foreigners."

1. Taking the words in their plain meaning, "strangers" may be regarded as visitors in a family but not members of it, and "foreigners," those who, being citizens of another country, are the subjects of another sovereign.

The subjects of a foreign prince may travel through a country, reside there, engage in commerce, and enter its army as mercenaries, without becoming naturalized citizens. While the heathens are far away

from the kingdom of heaven, those who are but nominal Christians are no more than temporary residents, or hirelings. They profess respect for Christ, but their heart is devoted to the service of another king, and therefore they "walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." They "fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and are by nature the children of wrath." They may engage in the service of Christ, but not from a spirit of loyalty, but for the sake of temporal advantages and the hope of reward. Christ employs many of these in various departments of his work to accomplish such results as he sees proper; he liberally rewards them, but in the end he dismisses them like the discontented labourers in the vineyard, saying to them: Take that which is yours, and go your way; as you wrought for hire but not for me, you have received what you agreed to labour for, and have no further claims on me; your own choice must now be your portion for ever. Many such mercenaries have been brought nigh, not only externally, but by a change of heart and disposition.

2. Persons may visit a family, stay there for some time, and share in the comforts, hospitality, courtesies, and kindness of the household without obtaining the rights of children. They have no claim either upon the affection or property of the head of the family, but

are liable to expulsion from the house at any time. Analogous to this is the position of many in God's house, the church; for they are no more than visitors who are led into it by various causes. Some consider alliance with it respectable, and fitted to give them such influence in society as will likely promote their success in life. The world disappoints some who, without a change of heart or character, take refuge in the church; others, without any desire of residing for ever in the house of God, seek temporary shelter there. All such leave its fellowship when they think they can do as well otherwise, or when their connection with it exposes them to any trials, disappointment, or mortification. When Christ is weary of such followers, he sometimes drives them away, as he often did when on earth. He purged his threshing-floor then, and the chaff was blown away by his doctrine and the self-denial necessary to discipleship. It is people of such worthless character that God renews in the spirit of their mind, brings nigh to himself, and makes "fellow-citizens with the saints," and members "of the household of God."

II. Notice the transference of their allegiance from the prince of this world to the King of heaven.

1. This change of relation is preceded by certain preparations.

They are convinced that the service of the prince of this world is slavery. Some spend many years therein before they discover with sufficient clearness that this is the case; finding pleasure in sin, they pursue it, and are impatient of restraints upon their foolish course. They regard those who show the impropriety of their conduct and warn them of danger, either as enemies or as meddling friends. Some really discover that the service of sin entails punishment in this life, but its power over them detains them in its practice; and others who refrain from its grossest acts regard themselves free, though it reigns in their minds with all its power in its most deadly forms. In all cases it is only when the Holy Ghost with his divine power convinces sinners of the enormity of sin, and the dread consequences to which it exposes them, that they awake to the real peril of their state so as to desire deliverance from guilt and punishment. It is when they discover that the wages of sin is death that they become disposed to consider the gracious proposals of the King of heaven, who offers pardon to all who will renounce the false claims of sin upon them, and will submit to his authority in reliance on his mercy and grace.

2. When thus convinced, enlightened, and spiritually renewed, sinners voluntarily turn from sin unto God, swear allegiance to him, and, for the fulfilment of their engagement, they rely on his power to sustain

them. They believe his promise to this effect, and as they advance in self-denying obedience, they find that his service is not the irksome bondage that they apprehended in the days of their ignorance, but true liberty. They find that God has dealt bountifully with them in making ample provision for their comfort, and they are enabled to see that a glorious future is prepared for them.

III. This leads us to notice the advantages of the citizens of the kingdom of heaven.

. They are under the government of a powerful, just, wise and generous King.

To remove the great obstacle to their reception into the kingdom of God, their lawful King, who undertook to suffer the penalty of their rebellion, satisfied the demands of justice by discharging their liabilities. In due time, by the demonstration and power of his Spirit, he casts "down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and brings into captivity every thought to obedience" to himself. 2 Cor. x. 5. When he comes, he finds the heart altogether opposed to him; for the "strong man armed keepeth his palace: but when he, the stronger, cometh, he shall overcome him, and take from him all his armour wherein he trusts, and divideth his spoils." Luke xi. 21, 22. Christ expels Satan, and condemns to crucifixion all the wicked brood that

he produced in the heart ; he nails to the cross the carnal mind with its enmity to God, and makes it secure there, so that it cannot escape until it be destroyed. When Christ sets up his throne in the heart he reigns there for ever. It is true that the seed of the devil that remains there causes much trouble though bound ; sometimes it threatens even a revolution, but with all the aid of its father, it cannot overthrow the sovereign authority of Christ the King Almighty, who has set up his rule that he may bring the whole man into submission to his sway. Many yield themselves to Christ in appearance only, but these withhold a part from him ; they obey him in certain things because it suits their natural taste to do so, or they find it to their temporal advantage or their pleasure in certain things ; sins die out with advancing years, and they fancy that they serve Christ though they do not restrain their malice, envy, pride, and covetousness. Some people suppose that Christ rules in them because they are religious, and perhaps zealous about certain rites, though they have no regard to his will in practical matters, and fail to cultivate spirituality, uprightness, honour and charity. Those in whom Christ rules have sincerely surrendered themselves to him, they often renew their covenant with him, and honestly desire him to subject everything in them to him, that all wicked inclinations, passions, and lusts may be destroyed.

2. The citizens of the kingdom of heaven are preferred to great honours.

Their character by nature was infamous, for on account of transgressions and guilt they were condemned "to shame and everlasting contempt"; but on their submission to Christ, they became united to him as their federal Head, his Mediatorial righteousness became theirs, and so they obtained a new character, for they were pronounced just, when they came to him, and since, nothing stands charged against them. Though they had no original righteousness, yet a righteousness, of such value that it surpasses that of holy angels who never sinned was graciously imputed to them. On this account, "God was not ashamed to be called their God," and he was just when he justified them.

They have all the honours of citizenship in the kingdom of the saints; for they have received the freedom of the commonwealth with all its immunities, and a right to all the privileges of the holy community. They are entitled to take such parts in its solemn services as they are capable of performing to edification. A place at the table of their Lord and King is their right, and no one can debar them from it without violating the laws of the kingdom. It is admitted that they may be excluded temporarily for improper conduct, but otherwise no one has a right to keep them away. They are permitted to come into the presence of their King as often as they wish to obtain his counsel with regard to all their affairs. They may confidently ask

the aid of his power to enable them to carry out all enterprises which they undertake in the fear of God. He is ready to extricate them from difficulties, to protect them in dangers, and to give them a victory over their enemies. They have angels to minister to them, for God gives these holy spirits "charge over them, to keep them in all their ways, and they shall bear them up in their hands, lest they dash their feet against a stone." Ps. xci. 11, 12. When Jacob was returning from Padan-aram, and parted in safety from his father-in-law, who pursued him with no friendly intentions, he was anxiously concerned about the feelings of his brother Esau towards him, but to encourage him "the angels of God met him on his way, and when he saw them, he said, This is God's host; and he called the name of that place Mahanaim." Gen. xxxii. 1, 2. They were sent to protect him from harm, and even if he had not seen them, he would be equally safe, because he was one of the citizens of heaven. They were sent to be his guard, and he was enabled to see them that his mind might be strengthened and comforted; for in the circumstances in which he was placed he was disposed to become despondent. As all the members of the holy commonwealth are similarly protected, they may have every confidence that nothing can really hurt them. They should go forward in the fear of God to perform every duty with courage, even if wicked men and devils oppose them. If we are the servants

of Christ we have nothing to fear; for besides the angels to defend us "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the water thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." Ps. xlv. 1-3.

Their highest honour is that they are constituted the sons of God; and being so, they are heirs of him, and joint heirs with Christ. They have, therefore, a common right to all things both in heaven and on earth. The apostle says, "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come: all are yours." 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22. They have no cause to envy the wealth of the rich, for it is enjoyed for a short season only, as it is lost, either at death, or by some accident during their lifetime. "Riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven." Prov. xxiii. 5. The wealth of the household of God endureth for ever; for God himself "is the portion of their inheritance and of their cup"; for that reason the Psalmist says, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." Ps. xvi. 6. Seeing, then, that the children of God have so wealthy a property which is managed by their Father, whose wisdom is unerring, whose power is infinite, whose knowledge is absolutely perfect, and

whose loving-kindness is unbounded, they should have full confidence in him that whatever is for their benefit shall certainly be given them. If it is best that they should have abundance of worldly goods, he will give it; if living from hand to mouth, he will give that, and if want is beneficial, he will give that; but he always controls all circumstances to produce the very results that he sees needful. In all conditions God's children are encouraged to come to their Father to make their wants known to him. He encourages them to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Heb. iv. 16.

3. The children of God are commanded to rejoice in their privileges.

Having such advantages, we should cheerfully avail ourselves of our high privileges and make it our business to bring all matters in which we are interested regularly before God. If our health is failing, let us go to him to entreat him to do in the case whatever will be most beneficial to us. We are permitted to ask the removal of the trouble, but in submission to him. When in darkness our spirits are depressed, we should go to him to ask him to cause light to arise in our minds in the way that shall best promote our welfare and his glory. When, in doubtful affairs, we do not well understand the path of duty, let us ask his guidance, that he may lead us in a plain

path, and not suffer our feet to stumble; for if we do this, we shall be saved from many a false step that we would otherwise take. We are also permitted to bring the affairs of others before God; parents are encouraged to pray for their children, and, when uncharitably foolish their parents should persevere in their supplications for them in the face of the greatest discouragements; for, if they do so, they will receive proofs of God's faithfulness. In one word, the privileges of the people of God are all that can be desired, and far more than we can at present understand; they are not only citizens, but honoured princes of the kingdom of heaven. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." 1 John iii. 2.

Strangers and foreigners who yet serve the prince of this world are invited to transfer their allegiance to God. The master whom they obey is one of the poorest persons in the universe, so that though he promises happiness to his subjects, he cannot give any permanent comfort, for he as a bankrupt is deeper in debt than any other creature. The wages of his service is death. If sinners do not desire to share in that sad reward with the devil, let them come to God, humbly beseeching him to make them willing and able to change masters, and swear allegiance to Jesus Christ, God's Mediatorial King, on his holy hill of Zion.

DISCOURSE XXII.

THE HABITATION OF GOD.

Eph. ii. 20, 22 : " And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth into an holy temple in the Lord : in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

IN this chapter the apostle shows that Jewish and Gentile believers are by the cross of Christ reconciled to God and to each other; and that Gentiles, instead of being strangers and foreigners, are "fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God." He first compares the community of the saints to a commonwealth of which all of them are citizens, and then he abruptly changes the figure, and speaks of them as a family, each one of which is a member of the royal household of heaven. From the household he passes to the house, and speaks of it as "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone."

These three verses are a suitable conclusion of the apostle's grand exposition of the fundamental doctrines of the gospel in the first two chapters of this great epistle. God is now rearing a temple to be a

habitation for himself, and it is destined to surpass all his works in magnificence and glory.

I. Notice the Architect of this building.

1. The plan.

When a king or nobleman resolves to build a palace he has an idea of the structure in his own mind, and if his intellect is sufficiently powerful, he forms an image of the edifice, not only of its size, form, and external appearance, but also of its various parts, doors, windows, apartments, and decorations; and he employs a man of known skill to draw plans to guide the builders. As God from eternity purposed to rear a habitation for himself, he had an exact plan of it in his own mind. He had a distinct view, not merely of the whole, but of every part of it, and also of every step necessary to complete the grand edifice. Though heaven, which is his throne and high residence, excels in glory all other places in the universe, yet, as if not satisfied with this, he always resolved to erect a palace that would please him more, because through it he resolved to display the glory of his character, dignity, and wealth before "the principalities and powers in heavenly places." Eph. iii. 10. He says of it that he has great pleasure in it. "For the Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell; for I have desired it." Ps. cxxxii. 13, 14. He says that he will be per-

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fectly satisfied with it when it shall be completed. When he created the heavens and earth with all that they contain, he was so pleased that he declared them to be very good, but of this new creation it is said that "he will rejoice over it with joy ; will rest in his love ; and will joy over it with singing." Zeph. iii. 17.

2. This structure shall be so great, marvellous, and glorious that nothing less than infinite intelligence could devise its plan with all its details. If God had seen proper to propose to the angels that surround his throne, and are great in might, to draw out the form of a dwelling place for him, they could not see that anything more suitable than his eternal habitation in the heaven of heavens could be made, or if they thought it possible, they could not think what it should be ; and if the outlines of the plan were set before them, they could not arrange its parts, or know how it could be constructed. All the created intelligence in the universe could not form the pattern of this grand structure ; it is therefore a glorious exhibition of Divine wisdom.

3. It required unbounded wealth to build according to the pattern formed in the mind of God.

The Saviour spake of the folly of the man who would undertake to construct an edifice when he had not sufficient means to finish it. "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it ?

Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish." Luke xiv. 28-30. Such a person would be sadly mortified, but this is not the case with God; for he not only had intelligence to devise, but he has abundant means to carry out his plan; for his wealth is inexhaustible. He engaged in this glorious enterprise "that in ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace." In God there is infinite wealth of power, wisdom, holiness, justice, mercy, compassion, and truth, and he is therefore able to carry out his great idea to the admiration of holy creatures, the mortification of his enemies, and to his own satisfaction.

II. Notice the foundation of this building. "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone."

1. Observe that this edifice is erected on the attributes of God. "His foundation is in the holy mountain." Ps. lxxxvii. 1. "Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." Ps. xcvi. 2. The earthly emblem of this palace was erected on the rocky eminence of Mount Zion in Jerusalem, so that it could not be easily moved, and the spiritual house is built on the eternal rock, the unchangeable God. It is

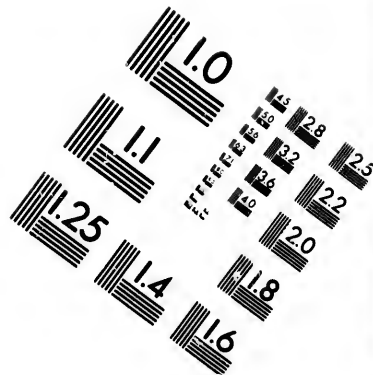
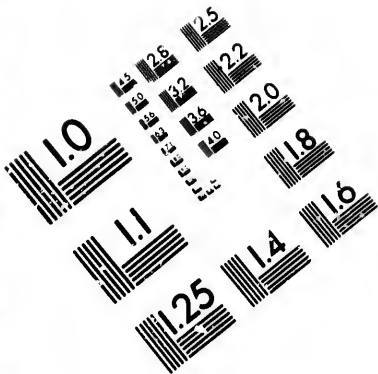
not built on the sand of human opinions or persons, such as Peter or any other man, as some think, but on God himself, and on the person of his Son. God is not like the "foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the wind blew, and beat upon that house, and great was the fall of it"; but rears an edifice as stable as himself, and "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

2. The right to build on this foundation was purchased by Christ.

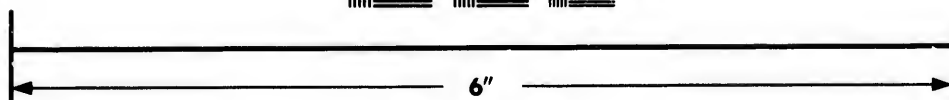
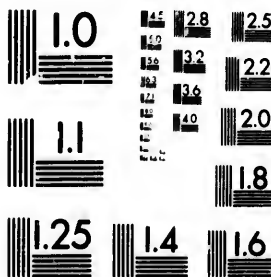
As the title to set up this structure on this site was forfeited, it was necessary to redeem it in accordance with justice; but there was not among all the creatures that God made any one that could pay the price that was justly due, nor did any of them know who could do it. It required infinite wisdom to discover one that had sufficient wealth for the purpose. God knew that his own eternal Son was able to pay all that was demanded, and as his mind was settled upon carrying out his great purpose, he appointed him to make the purchase, and entered into a covenant with him wherein it was promised him that the house would be his own, and that he would be constituted its chief corner-stone.

3. When Christ according to his agreement gave his own life to satisfy all demands, the foundation stones were laid, that the building might be proceeded with





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and built on "the foundation of the apostles and prophets." This expression is by some understood to mean the foundation on which the apostles and prophets were laid; by some, their testimony concerning the foundation; and by some, the apostles and prophets themselves, as the stones first laid, and therefore forming the lowest course in the edifice. Though the first two views express important truths, yet it is more natural to understand the passage as meaning the last, because Christ is here represented, not as their foundation, but as occupying the most important position in the same course, and binding the whole together by imparting his own life to all the stones laid upon the foundation, and also those forming the superstructure, so that they all become living stones. In this way "all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." It is united in all its parts, not by mortar and cement, as material buildings are, but by the Divine life of Christ, which animates each individual so that he can never be separated, for the bond of union will not decay.

III. Notice the superstructure and materials. Ye
"are built upon the foundation of the apostles
and prophets."

1. The patriarchs, prophets, and saints of the Old Testament are built together with New Testament believers. The Holy Ghost hewed and polished them.

and Christ, the chief corner-stone, made them living stones by imparting his own life to them.

2. When Christ died and rose again from the dead, stones were gathered out of the masses of Jews and Gentiles that they might be dressed, fitted, and built in the structure. To collect materials God employs many servants, whom he commands to go to all parts of the world, and take some of all nations without respect of natural character or rank among men for this purpose. They are to gather what they can get without any regard to its qualities or fitness. In this they are directed to act differently from those who procure materials for other buildings: for they must reject many stones because they cannot be hewed on account of cracks, flaws, veins, or bands of different substances, so that they either crumble under the hammer or chisel, or split in all directions but that desired. The material used in God's building is originally unsuitable for the purpose, because its nature is so stubborn that no created power can shape it into the proper form. Mere human skill may polish it in various ways, but it cannot fit it in the smallest degree for a place in the spiritual building.

IV. This leads us to notice the Builder of God's palace. "Ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

1. Observe that the rearing of this structure is now in progress.

As already observed, much valuable material was prepared by the Holy Ghost in Old Testament days; the resurrection of Christ proved that the right to build on the eternal rock was procured by his obedience and death; the apostles, and prophets of their day, were laid thereon as the foundation course, and the risen Saviour in his Mediatorial character was the chief corner-stone by whom the whole is united as a living structure by the regular communication of his life to each part. The Spirit, by such agents as he sees proper to use, prepares living stones, which he gathers, quickens, and by a Divine act unites to Christ.

In apostolic days the early progress made was rapid; for in a few years the building so advanced that many thought it would be completed in the same age, and that all the promises with regard to it would be fulfilled before all that generation would pass away. The enemy of God and men became so much alarmed for the interests of his kingdom that he used all his skill and power to hinder, if he could not defeat, the Divine purpose. He set about destroying the stones of the building, obstructing the labourers, and driving them away from their work; but when he found the edifice rising all the more rapidly through his opposition, he assumed such a show of friendship that he induced many of the builders to use inferior materials. By that fraud he greatly retarded the progress of the enterprise, as for ages it was very much "wood, hay, and stubble" that was used. The Holy Ghost, how-

ever, has carried on the work according to the original plan, from time to time separating from it much of the devil's rubbish, every particle of which he will at last remove that it may be burnt up. The structure has by this time grown to noble dimensions, so that in our day, in spite of all efforts to interrupt its progress, it is manifestly advancing. We see living stones collected from all parts of the world, and we have God's declaration that the whole earth shall contribute to it, and that at last it shall be all it was intended to be.

2. When it shall be completed it will be the most magnificent of all the works of God. It shall have neither defect nor excess, nor shall any stone intended for a place therein be absent, but each shall occupy the position meant for it. It shall be exceedingly precious, for every stone in it was redeemed from destruction by the life of the Son of God.

V. Notice the purpose for which this palace is erected.

1. It is intended to be God's temple. It "groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." It is consecrated to him from its commencement, nor can it be justly claimed by any one else, or appropriated to any other use. God claims the whole church, and every member of it, as his; indeed, each of them is called his temple. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile

the temple of God, him shall God destroy ; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. The money changers should not be permitted to desecrate God's house, and, if we allow them there, the Lord will drive them out, with severe reproofs to those who countenance their profane intrusion ; but if we persist in harbouring them, he will cast ourselves out with them to be burned along with them. Because the whole church belongs to God, he alone has a right to regulate the affairs of his own house ; no one else should be lord in it, or make laws for its management, nor should any of God's family submit to rules not established by the Head of the church.

The phrase, "in the Lord," is connected with the word "holy," and means that the church is holy in virtue of its union to the Lord ; and grows "unto an holy temple," because thus united to him. He imparts life to it with such Divine energy that it increases, and every part joined to it by his power is made holy by his life, which is diffused through all its parts. It is proper that it should be holy, not only consecrated as a temple, but also holy in its nature, for God's service of prayer, praise, adoration, and thanksgiving is to be offered up continually and for ever therein.

2. It is God's habitation as well as his temple. It is his home, where he dwells with his family, where he feeds them and admits them to familiarity with himself. as much as is consistent with wise management. The

time is coming when all restrictions shall be removed, and every member of God's family may act as he sees good, but at present, because not fully educated, but deficient in knowledge, wisdom, and self-restraint, they are kept in check. They are, however, destined to obtain full liberty when their nature shall become altogether conformed to the will of God.

If we form part of God's temple, it is but reasonable that we should greatly appreciate his kindness in choosing us from among so many to become living stones therein. It is not because we were better than others or more suitable materials, but because he loved us. We were exposed to wrath as others, but God gave his own Son to redeem us, and to purchase for us a right to be built in God's temple to be a holy habitation to him through the Spirit.

The temple of God is not yet finished, many rough stones shall be yet dug, gathered, hewed, and polished. The Lord's labourers are now at work to move unshapely materials from their natural beds, and the Holy Ghost is in them to give them success in their operations. Dropping the metaphor, I ask you if you have not at times felt that the Spirit was acting on your hearts. If you did, it was to make you living stones, but some of you have yet resisted him. As he exerts his power on you by reasonable representations of truth, pray to him to renew you that you may be made willing to become fit for a place in the spiritual house.

There is much rotten material seemingly built in God's temple that shall yet be burned. Let professors see that they be not some of it. Let none be satisfied without Scriptural evidence of possessing spiritual life.

DISCOURSE XXIII.

THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST.

Eph. iii. 1-7: "For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given to me to you-ward: how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ;) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power."

IN the two preceding chapters the apostle unfolds the fundamental doctrines of the gospel; he states that God elected in Christ a people to himself "before the foundation of the world," predestinated them "unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ," who redeemed them by "his blood," and, in reward of his works, was raised from the dead, and exalted by "the exceeding greatness" of the power of God, and set "at his own

right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." By the exercise of the same power, the redemption wrought by Christ is effectually applied to the elect, so that they are quickened, raised, and made to sit "in heavenly places in Christ Jesus"; and Gentiles, who "were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise," are made "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." These great truths were mysteries until they were revealed to the apostles and prophets of Christ.

In examining this passage, let us consider the mystery of Christ and the revelation of it.

1. Notice the mystery of Christ.

A mystery is a truth or fact so obscurely revealed that men are unable to understand it clearly. God intimated to our first parents that a Deliverer should come who would avenge their wrong by the overthrow of their adversary; but though they believed the promise, they understood but little of the person and work of their deliverer. In the patriarchal and Mosaic worship his redeeming work was obscurely set forth in sacrifices, and prophets gave glowing descriptions of his glorious character, but neither themselves nor others had clear conceptions of himself and his work. The

doctrine of election by grace was intimated in Old Testament days by the call of Abraham to be the heir of the promise, the choice of Isaac to the exclusion of Ishmael and the other sons of Abraham from a share in the typical inheritance, the choosing of Jacob before he and his brother Esau were born, the separation of the tribe of Levi to the holy service, of Aaron and his family to the priesthood, and of David out of his father's family to the regal dignity. These and similar selections of persons, by God, to positions of service and dignity, were practical proofs of the doctrine, but it remained a mystery until it was more plainly revealed by Christ and the apostles, that the Father had given him a people whom he had chosen "before the foundation of the world." Though the first promise of a Redeemer was made to the human family, yet when the service of God and the covenant were restricted to one branch of the descendants of Abraham, the favoured people concluded that none of the heathens could partake of their privileges unless they became Israelites by receiving the rite of circumcision.

1. The mystery of Christ, besides the introduction of the Gentiles into the church, includes all truths concerning him and the gospel.

Though Old Testament saints believed that the Messiah would come to redeem his people by his suffering for them, and would exalt them with himself to glory, yet they were far from understanding the manner

of his conflict and triumph. They hoped that through him they would obtain pardon of sin, eternal blessedness, and glory; for Job said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." Job xix. 25-27. David looked for the same blessed end. "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake, with thy likeness." Ps. xvii. 15. Isaiah saw the same glorious deliverance from death, and said, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." Isa. xxvi. 19. The same truth was declared by Daniel. "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." Dan. xii. 2, 3. The doctrines of expiation and the resurrection were made known in these ancient days, but men's conceptions of them were confused, because they were but dimly revealed. These and other truths were mysteries. The prophets, to whom "the Spirit of Christ which was in

them" communicated these things, were at a loss to understand them; for they "enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto us: searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ . . . did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." 1 Peter i. 10, 11. Christ "brought life and immortality to life through the gospel." 2 Tim. i. 10. These great things were before so dimly revealed that their nature could not be clearly ascertained.

2. The truth expressly referred to here is the introduction of the Gentiles into the fellowship of the church. "Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by his Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel."

In the days of Christ the carnal Jews could not believe it possible that the Gentiles should share the favour of God with them, and thought the announcement of it a most wicked heresy, deserving death. When, therefore, they saw it accomplished they were enraged beyond measure. Though the disciples of Christ were commanded by their Master to go into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature, they did not at first understand that the Gentiles could be received into the church without their becom-

ing Jews by circumcision. The mystery was made clear by supernatural revelation before they were received into the enjoyment of Christian privileges; and even after the Lord made known his mind on the subject to his servants many Christian Jews refused to associate with Gentile believers either in religious or social intercourse. They thought they should not eat with them, and even Peter, who was instructed by a voice from heaven "not to call any man common or unclean," was induced, when in Antioch, by certain men who "came from James," to withdraw from fellowship with the Gentiles, though he formerly ate with them. Gal. ii. 12. So profound was the darkness on this subject that it took some time to dispel it by the light of the gospel.

3. Paul was peculiarly entrusted with the proclamation of this truth to the Gentiles. "I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles," "was made a minister" of this mystery, "according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power."

Though the connecting of the seventh verse with the first makes good sense, it seems, however, that the clause, "was made a minister," was not the principal thing which the apostle had in view when he commenced the sentence by the words, "For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ," but the statement, "I bow my knees unto the Father of our

Lord Jesus Christ" in the fourteenth verse. If that is the proper construction, all between it and the first verse is a parenthesis, probably the longest in the Bible. Omitting the parenthesis, the sentence reads: "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Some understand the first verse as elliptical, and read it, "For this cause I Paul *am* the prisoner of Jesus Christ;" but that would make the verse tautological, and would mean because I preach that you Gentiles "are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God," I am "a prisoner for you," whereas the meaning is, because you "are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God," "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." *

The apostle was not a prisoner for crime, or debt, or for sedition, but for preaching that Jesus was the Christ, and that Gentile believers should be admitted into all the privileges of the household of God. When "the Jews which were of Asia," who knew the character of his doctrine, "saw him in the temple, they stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place; and further, brought Greeks also into the

* See Dr. Hodge on the passage.

temple, and hath polluted this holy place." Acts xxi. 27, 28. When, under the protection of the Roman troops, he addressed the enraged Jewish crowd, and gave an account of his descent, youth, education in the religion of the Jews, and conversion, they gave him "audience" until he declared that the Lord said to him in a vision: "Depart; for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." On hearing these words, they "lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live." Acts xxii. 21, 22. In his youth he was a Pharisee, and "beyond measure persecuted the church of God, and wasted it. . . . But when it pleased God, who separated him from his mother's womb, and called him by his grace, to reveal his Son in him, that he might preach him among the heathen; immediately he conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went he up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before him; but he went into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus." Gal. i. 13-17. He took it for granted that the Ephesians heard of the "dispensation of the grace of God which was given to him towards them." Paul would never preach Christ were it not that he was made a minister by Divine power. Christ met him on his way to Damascus to destroy the church there, and in a moment changed his purpose, so that he submitted to the Lord, and was in due time informed by him that he was to go to the Gentiles.

II. Notice the revelation of the mystery of Christ.

1. It was made known to the apostles and prophets by supernatural communication from God.

When Cornelius of Cæsarea was directed by an angel to send for Peter to give instruction to himself and his household, before the arrival of the messenger sent by Cornelius, Peter, in a vision, saw "heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air, and there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." Acts x. 11-15. In the meantime the messengers came to the house, and Peter was plainly commanded by God "to go with them, doubting nothing." Acts x. 20. In obedience to the Divine revelation, Peter accompanied the messengers to Cæsarea, preached Christ to Cornelius and his family, and admitted them to membership in the commonwealth of Israel by administering the ordinance of baptism to them. When Paul received similar instructions from Christ, he nobly followed them, and often referred afterwards to his appointment to the apostleship of the Gentiles. The Lord came to Ananias of Damascus

in a vision, and commanded him to visit Paul, now an humbled penitent, with instructions to baptize him; because he was "a chosen vessel to bear" the Lord's "name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." Acts ix. 15. Ananias did as he was directed, "and putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, (having stood up,) and was baptized." Acts ix. 17, 18. In Antioch, where certain "prophets and teachers ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus." Acts xiii. 1-4. Paul did not receive his knowledge of the mystery from men, for he says: "I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of men, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Gal. i. 11, 12. It is quite probable that the knowledge of the "mystery of Christ" was imparted to him when he was exalted to "the third heaven," where he "heard unspeakable words." 2 Cor. xii. 2, 4.

2. Paul's knowledge of "the mystery of Christ" may be known from the two preceding chapters. "By revelation he made known unto me the mystery; as I wrote afore (have written already) in few words, whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ."

Some suppose that he had written another epistle to the Ephesians which God did not see proper to cause to be preserved, but this supposition is unnecessary, seeing that the first two chapters of this epistle abundantly show how well he understood the truths of the gospel; and though written in few words, no part of the New Testament sets forth the fundamental principles of Christianity more clearly. What he had written concerning the call of the Gentiles in the second chapter plainly indicates his accurate knowledge of the whole plan of salvation, or "mystery of Christ," as it is here called.

3. This mystery was dark in Old Testament times. "Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed."

The benevolent purpose of God towards all men was not clearly disclosed until the coming of Christ unto the world; it was but very obscurely made known to Israel, and it was altogether concealed from the Gentiles, that God formed a plan of redemption which included them as well as the Jews. Though uttered by ancient prophets as they were moved by the Holy

Ghost, and though Paul often cited their statements in proof of the Divine intention of extending gospel privileges to all nations, yet the Gentiles did not know these predictions which even Israel did not understand. In the prophecy of Hosea it is said, as quoted by Paul: "I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God." Rom. ix. 25, 26. In Isaiah we read, "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth." Isa. xlix. 6. There are many such allusions to the call of the Gentiles in the Psalms and other prophets, and it was expressly stated in the promise to Abraham: "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed;" but the people of Israel misinterpreted these predictions, as we often misunderstand many unfulfilled prophecies.

4. This mystery was not understood until it was revealed to the apostles and prophets of Christ. "Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the gospel."

These were the only inspired men, who, in New Testament times, infallibly made known the will of God. The apostles were permanent mediums of reve-

lation while they lived, whereas the New Testament prophets were only occasionally inspired. They were both holy, inasmuch as they were sanctified by the Spirit, as all true believers are, and also because they were consecrated to a sacred office. The apostles had no successors in their peculiar position, inasmuch as there has not been since any inspired men to whom the promise of ability to declare the will of God with infallible certainty was made. An uninspired apostle is as great a contradiction as an unholy saint. The Popes of Rome lay claim to infallibility, but they have authoritatively spoken too many things that are contrary to Scripture, and therefore their claim is false.*

Reflections :

1. We should thankfully receive the knowledge of "the mystery of Christ" which is imparted to us in the word of God, and show our appreciation of it by a daily perusal of the Scriptures with earnest prayer that God by his Spirit should give us power to understand it savingly. If we appreciate it we are desirous of sending it to those who are yet ignorant of it, that they may be enlightened and become "fellow-heirs, and of the same body."

2. If any to whom the gospel is preached refuse the privileges offered therein, they must perish. Let sinners then pray to God to give them understanding, and persuade them to become fellow-citizens of the saints.

* See Hodge on the passage.

DISCOURSE XXIV.

THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST.

Eph. iii. 8, 9: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ."

PAUL was appointed to the apostolic office that he might proclaim among the Gentiles "the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men," but it was revealed to him when he "was made a minister of it, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto him by the effectual working of his power." Considering his own unworthiness, he highly appreciated the favour shown to him by God in appointing him to so honourable an office, and in entrusting so important a commission to him as to "preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." In this passage we have the preacher, his exalted theme, and the purpose for which he was appointed as a preacher.

1. Notice the preacher.
1. Consider his parents, education, and character.

His parents, though Jews, were citizens of the Roman empire. They resided in Tarsus in Cilicia, and were of the sect of the Pharisees. Paul called himself "a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and as touching the law a Pharisee." Phil. iii. 5. He was "a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee." Acts xxxiii. 6. There is reason to believe that, in his boyhood, he was carefully instructed in the Scriptures, and trained in religious duties. He was no doubt made well acquainted with the Bible account of the creation, the fall of man, the murder of Abel, the universal corruption of the human race, its destruction by the flood, and the story of Noah and his family. We can suppose his young mind to have been deeply interested in the call of Abraham, the birth of Isaac, the election of Jacob, the history of Joseph, and the late birth of Benjamin, his own progenitor, at the expense of his mother's life. Benjamin, in his birth some years after the rest of his father's family, and other incidents in his life, bore some resemblance to the apostle, for he was born again and appointed to the apostleship long after the other apostles, and when the change in his views became known he lost the friendship of the Jews his kinsmen, except such as embraced the religion of Christ like himself. He was no doubt well instructed in his youth in the law and the prophets. It also seems that he received a liberal education both in Hebrew and Greek learning, and probably acquired

a knowledge of the Latin tongue. Like other Jewish youths, he was taught a handicraft; he learned to be a tent-maker. He found these varied acquirements of great practical value to him in his apostolic labours; the high culture of his vigorous faculties enabled him to unfold the principles of the gospel with such clearness that he confuted his adversaries with success. He availed himself of his mechanical skill to support himself on many occasions. He was a warm and affectionate friend, an upright and earnest man, devout and zealous in the service of God, sincere and steadfast in his attachment to Christ.

2. We observe that his appointment to the office of a preacher of the mystery of Christ was accompanied with unusual circumstances.

He says himself that he "was made a minister . . . by the effectual working of God's power." Up to that time his purposes were far from preaching Christ; for it was when on his way to Damascus with authority from the chief priests to make prisoners of all who confessed Christ there, that, near the end of his journey, a light shone from heaven brighter than the sun, and he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Acts ix. 4. It was Christ who appeared to him in glory, and convinced him of the sinfulness of the course he was pursuing. He was profoundly astonished and alarmed, and by the power of Christ he became a new man. It was not the light,

the vision, or the voice that wrought the change in him, but "the effectual working" of the Spirit in his soul. Soon afterwards he was formally appointed to the apostleship, on the third day after the vision intimated to Ananias by the Lord that he was "a chosen vessel to bear" the name of Christ "before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." Acts ix. 15. Some years after this, when in Jerusalem praying in the temple, while in a trance, the Lord said to him, "For I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." Acts xxii. 21. Perhaps this was the occasion on which he "was caught up to the third heaven." 2 Cor. xii. 2.

3. Consider Paul's estimate of himself.

If any man might be exalted on account of favours from God—such as his extraordinary appointment to the ministry, his faithfulness in the work, the difficulties he encountered, and his success—Paul might be the man. When forced to defend his apostolic character against the detractions of false teachers, he said, "Whereinsoever any is bold, I am bold also. Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool,) I am more: in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have

been in the deep ; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren ; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." 2 Cor. xi. 21-27. Notwithstanding his faithfulness to Christ, his patience in affliction, and the many tokens of Divine approbation which he had received, his estimate of himself was so low that he said he was "less than the least," not of the apostles only, but of all saints ; nor are we to suppose that this was a mere rhetorical flourish, but an honest confession of his views of himself. The expression is the strongest that language can express, indeed, he formed a new word for the occasion ; for to the superlative he added the termination of the comparative degree. He knew that his sins were forgiven, but there were certain acts of his past life that he could neither forget nor forgive. Because he persecuted Christ in the saints, he regarded himself as utterly unworthy. I believe that in this he was not altogether singular ; for in the history of many of God's people there are transgressions which they do not forget, and of which the remembrance so deeply humbles them as to cause them to think that the name by which Paul called himself, "less than the least of all saints," is with more justice due to them. I can imaginé a controversy

in heaven among the ransomed on this point, wherein each maintains that he is "less than the least of all saints," and that, for the honour of Christ, the title shall not be quietly yielded to Paul. Many believers have not been bloodthirsty persecutors as he was, but, if not, they sinned otherwise more grievously than he, and they know that their nature was wicked enough to commit any crime.

Considering his advantages, the apostle regarded his progress in holiness far less than it should be, and on that ground he depreciated himself, as every true believer does for similar reasons. Formalists may congratulate themselves on their attainments and worth, but sincere Christians are humble.

4. Paul's estimate of his office was high.

He regarded his appointment to the work of the ministry as a great favour. "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." He did not consider that his learning, culture, and zeal entitled him to the honourable position, but regarded his call to it as an act of Divine grace. He considered his office as high in dignity, and spoke of himself as an ambassador for Christ.

II. Notice his exalted theme. "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

It is apparently impossible to preach what is unsearchable ; for seeing that Christ is God, no created mind can adequately estimate his wealth, because it is infinite in length, breadth, height, and depth. Though no man can explore it so as to be able to unfold it in all its extent, yet ministers, who are taught of God, understand its nature so far as to be able to declare it to others. No man can fully comprehend the infinite, but we can know to some extent the character and attributes of him who is infinite, and our knowledge may be true as far as it goes. We may, therefore, apprehend and preach the riches of Christ in some measure to such extent that our statements may be quite correct. A geologist does not know, say, all the limestone in the world, but he has so carefully examined specimens of that mineral that he found it to be composed of certain elements ; he can show pieces of it, and, as far as he has learned, he can explain to others the properties of that species of rock. His teaching may be so distinct that those instructed by him may justly conclude that all limestone contains the same distinguishing characteristics. Another person might know so much more about the subject as to be able to explain it far more fully, but the descriptions of the former, though more limited, might be equally true as far as they went. In like manner the knowledge of all preachers of the riches of Christ is not equal ; but if they are new creatures, what they do know is so far correct that they can speak of it in accordance with the Word of God.

1. We observe for illustration that Christ's wealth in the physical world is unsearchable.

In viewing these wonders as we can, let us linger for a little in the vestibule of the temple that our vision may become gradually strengthened to discern the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The earth and the shining orbs of light, that are spread out in space, display riches of wisdom, power, and goodness. When we ascertain something of their distances, size, weight, motions, and orbits, we admire the might and skill of him who made and sustains them in their respective positions. They have given forth light to this world for thousands of years without being yet exhausted in the least. From this we may learn something of the great riches of Christ. If we examine the earth, we find it to be richly stored with valuable minerals, of which much has been dug for the purpose of being wrought into useful and ornamental articles. Though vast quantities of them have been extracted, manufactured, and wasted, the storehouse is not by any means exhausted, for Christ has this part of his riches safely deposited in his treasury, that he may gradually open it as he sees proper for the accomplishment of his purposes in this world. Great are the riches of genial influences that are continually imparted to this planet by the sun, which is placed in a position suitable for that purpose. Its heat and light descend upon us from day to day without any diminution. Though every creature on earth share in these influ-

ences, the portion of each is not any the less by what the rest receive. Its light and heat come to every one in as great abundance as if no other creature was lighted and warmed by them. Such is the riches of Christ that what is bestowed of it upon one does not impoverish any one else.

2. Christ is rich in spiritual things.

We have lingered a little at the entrance, but let us now advance to view greater things within, that we may see that Christ is rich in the heavenly blessings which he bountifully bestows upon his people. His merits are infinite, so that though we dishonoured the glory of the Most High God by our transgressions, on account of which justice demands that we, or some one for us, should suffer an equal dishonour to repair the wrong before we can be restored to the favour of God, yet seeing that we are finite creatures whose sufferings, however severe, could never satisfy its infinite demands, Christ in his rich love undertook the weighty task of rendering perfect satisfaction, so that in consequence God is just when he justifies the ungodly. His merits are inexhaustible, so that every sinner who believes on him receives a title to eternal glory, because his sins are forgiven for Christ's sake. In justification the righteousness of Christ in all its richness is imputed to every one who believes, as much as if he were the only one to whom it is imputed, nor does his receiving it all lessen it to any one else. -Our arithmetic is not fitted

to calculate this partnership ; for the whole is given to every one and to all. We are unspeakably poor, for we are by nature under a debt that is infinite in amount, but having paid it all, besides delivering us from punishment, Christ secured for us, by his obedience, a title to an eternal inheritance, the value of which no creature can estimate.

He has riches of spiritual unction ; because as Mediator he received the Holy Ghost without measure for the purpose of giving him to us to dwell in us. As the Spirit is a Divine Person he is infinite, and dwells in every believer with all his attributes ; but though the fulness of his power, wisdom, love, and sanctifying influences reside in one, this does not lessen his gracious indwelling for all purposes in others. He works as he pleases in every one of his people, that he may enlighten, strengthen, and comfort him.

Christ has rich privileges which he generously bestows on his people. If we have the Spirit of Christ, we are the sons of God, but if sons we are "heirs ; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." So rich is this inheritance that each heir inherits the whole as much as if he was the only heir. This gives us a right of access to God with boldness. We are permitted to ask all things necessary to promote our well-being. "Ask and it shall be given you." Mat. vii. 7. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." John xv. 7.

Christ has such riches of knowledge that he can instruct the most ignorant in the mysteries of the gospel so successfully that they receive saving apprehensions of the unsearchable riches of Christ. If we are convinced of our own ignorance, let us apply to him that he may enlighten us; for he has "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Col. ii. 3.

As he has riches of authority and power, he can subdue us to himself, restrain all our enemies, and give us a decisive victory over them at last. He commands us to call upon him for protection when they assail us, either with craft or violence, or molest us in any other way. If wicked men combine to hurt us, let us trust in God with confidence in his power to save us from every evil work.

He is so rich in love and compassion that for our "sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." He voluntarily became the object of God's wrath that he might save us from it; and he drank the bitter cup of Divine vengeance on sin that we might be saved from eternal woe.

III. Notice the purpose for which Paul was appointed to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men know

what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ."

By the preaching of the gospel the knowledge of the mystery of Christ is imparted to men of all nations. It was once confined to the Jews, but under the New Testament dispensation it is communicated to the Gentiles as well. Though God revealed his eternal power and Godhead by the works of creation, yet his purposes of grace were made known to men by a verbal revelation. During the Old Testament period these truths were but obscurely made known in types, symbols, and dark prophecies, so that they continued to be mysteries until Christ fulfilled the law, died, rose again, and ascended into heaven. Then he committed the dispensation of the mystery to the apostles and ministers of the gospel to unfold it to all men, both Jews and Gentiles, in all ages until he come again.

These things had "been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ" until the proper time for their manifestation came; but they have since been set forth by the gospel and the administration of its ordinances. It is an important truth that it is by Jesus Christ that God has always made himself known: first, in the work of creation and providence, "For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and

that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers : all things were created by him, and for him : and he is before all things, and by him all things consist ;” secondly, by the work of redemption, “ He who hath seen me hath seen the Father.”

Reflections :

1. Seeing the wealth of Christ is so vast we should be so well satisfied with it that instead of setting our affections on enjoyments derived from the riches of this world, we should apply to Christ for the supply of all our wants. We are commanded to “be careful for nothing ; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving our requests should be made known unto God.” Phil. iv. 6. If we are poor, we should rejoice in the riches of Christ, for it is ours if we are his disciples. If we are guilty, his righteousness is rich. If we are weak, he is rich in power. He can supply every need to us, and let us therefore look to him. If we do this, “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Phil. iv. 7.

2. Sinners, come to Christ for riches ; because your own wealth is worthless, however highly you value it. He says to you, “ I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich.”

All that he asks in exchange is that you renounce confidence in your vile rubbish of self-righteousness, and your consent to be saved from sin. They are of no use to him, but if you do not give them to him to be destroyed, they will ruin your soul.

DISCOURSE XXV.

THE MANIFOLD WISDOM OF GOD.

Eph. iii. 10-12 : " To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord : in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him."

THE tenth verse depends, not on the expression, "God, who created all things by Jesus Christ," in the ninth verse, but on the apostle's statement of his own appointment to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. "I was made a minister," and "unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ ;" . . . "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."

I. Notice the exhibition of "the manifold wisdom of God."

If we were to consider the wisdom of God as it is displayed in the works of creation and providence, we might find much to admire; but as the apostle refers here to the work of redemption, we shall confine our meditations to that department of God's operations.

1. Observe that the forming of the plan of redemption was the product of infinite wisdom.

Created wisdom was unable to devise a method of reconciling God and sinners: holy angels could not see that the pardon of transgressors could be consistent with the justice of God, and lost angels thought that by the fall the new race was irrecoverably ruined forever. We can then fancy the devil's disappointment when he heard the first announcement of a Deliverer, and saw God's merciful treatment of our first parents.

2. The wisdom of God is revealed by the selection of a suitable Redeemer.

God knew what qualifications such a person required to possess, and that no mere creature that could be found, whether angelic or human, could possess the requirements necessary for the work; he, therefore, chose his own eternal Son to the office. He assumed our nature into personal union to himself, that in it he would render on our behalf all the obedience that could be demanded of him and, as our representative, suffer the punishment due to us. Because he discharged these

duties perfectly, and rendered satisfaction to justice, he now makes intercession for us in heaven with untailling success. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Heb. vii. 25. If any holy creature might have the benevolence to undertake our redemption, he could not accomplish it for want of worth and power. The Mediator needed to be the equal of God and also a man.

3. The wisdom of God is therefore displayed in the incarnation of Christ.

As God could not obey and suffer, it was necessary that the Son of God should become man, not by divesting himself of his divine attributes, for that is not possible, but by uniting our nature to himself. This wonderful union was devised from eternity, was obscurely intimated to our first parents, prefigured in Old Testament times by various typical representations, distinctly foretold in prophecies, and in the fulness of time it was accomplished. Christ was conceived in Nazareth of Galilee, so that the incarnation really took place there, though, to fulfil ancient prophecies, he was born in Bethlehem, the city of his human ancestors. In these incidents we see the wisdom of God manifested; for seeing that he was not only to be called a Nazarene, or Nazarite, as he really was above all others who were separated to God, and of whom the ancient Nazarites were types, it was proper that the eternal

Word should become flesh in that Galilean city; but seeing that he was David's royal heir, it was also proper that he should be born in Bethlehem, the city of David. God controlled the giving out of the decree of Caesar Augustus, and its communication to Joseph, that he and Mary left Nazareth to arrive in Bethlehem in due time for the birth of the Redeemer there.

4. The wisdom of God is displayed in the atonement.

Men could not think of an expiation, if it had not been revealed, and even when it was revealed, the meaning of it was misunderstood by most people, for the types appointed to foreshadow it were, in the judgment of many, substituted for the thing signified, and, therefore, sacrifices were regarded as expiations of sin. Notwithstanding the value attached to them, they did not satisfy the conscience; for the prophet represents men as saying in their anxiety about the matter: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Micah vi. 6, 7. If left to themselves men could never come to a satisfactory conclusion concerning the matter, and no wonder, for creation did not contain a sufficient sacrifice. As God alone knew

what would answer the purpose, he prepared a human nature for his own Son that he might offer it for sinners. Because Christ is a Divine Person such is his essential dignity that God's honour is satisfactorily vindicated by the sacrifice which he offered.

5. God's wisdom is manifested in the application of redemption to men.

Though the redemption is complete, and though, by God's authority, full assurance is given in the proclamation of it that whosoever accepts it by faith in Christ shall be pardoned and received into the favour of God, yet no one will receive it unless the Spirit of God works savingly in him. God commands the gospel to be preached as the means of making sinners willing to rest on Christ, but as it is inefficient in itself, it is made effectual by the Holy Ghost, who acts upon the soul in accordance with its natural constitution. By creating therein new dispositions, he gives the power of discerning spiritual things. The exercise of Divine energy in producing this change is said by the apostle to be greater than that exerted in the creation of the world, and equal to that put forth in raising Christ from the dead and exalting him to the right hand of the Father. "That ye may know . . . what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the

heavenly places." Eph. i. 18, 20. In the application of redemption to sinners there is not only a display of power, but also of wisdom in using suitable means, but yet such as cannot accomplish the end without the Spirit's mighty agency, so that the glory shall be altogether ascribed to God, and that no man can boast.

In carrying on the work of sanctification whereby the redeemed are made fit for heaven, where they shall have the full enjoyment of God for ever, the wisdom of God is constantly manifested. In this work he employs many instruments, some of which are fitted to promote holiness, and some that are in their nature of an opposite tendency; but God, who makes all things work together for good to them who love him, causes all means to conduce to the same benevolent end. He overrules, for the salvation of his people, the wisdom of wicked men with the wicked craft which devils exercised to ruin them. So great is the wisdom of God that the wisdom of creatures is nothing in comparison with it. "God hath made foolish the wisdom of this world." 1 Cor. i. 20. In the various dispensations by which the church is sanctified, guided and brought to glory, there are manifold displays of Divine wisdom; they are always new, always wonderful, always adapted to the necessities of each case. The ever-varying tints of the clouds, which are constantly changing according to the light shining on them, may be regarded as an emblem of the manifold wisdom of God in the redemption of his people.

II. Notice the Person in whom the wisdom of God in the plan of redemption is exhibited.

1. God purposed from eternity that his wisdom in the salvation of his people should be displayed by Christ.

God from eternity formed a plan of saving sinners. That benevolent plan included the incarnation and the whole work of Christ. Indeed it was for the glory of Christ that God purposed to create all things, and to redeem his people by him. We cannot easily persuade ourselves to think that God has no plan with regard to the salvation of men, but that, acting in the matter at haphazard, without any settled purpose, he exercises his wisdom to meet emergencies as they arise. It is hardly possible that any intelligent Christian can so think. However much the people of God may differ on various points, they all believe that he has a plan with reference to the salvation of sinners. We conclude, therefore, that, if he formed such a plan, he formed it from eternity, and that he has not amended or modified it since he first devised it; for his thoughts and purposes are not successive and changeable as ours are, but eternal and immutable. Because he sees the end from the beginning, his purposes are always the same. "I am Jehovah, I change not." Mal. iii. 6.

2. The benevolent purpose of God with regard to the redemption of his people included the incarnation and death of Christ according to the Divine plan.

It was eternally settled by the Father with the full consent of the Son that he should come into this world in our nature to meet all our liabilities, that we, being freed from them, might be saved. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John iii. 16.

3. Because Christ satisfactorily discharged the indebtedness of his people, "we have boldness and access to God with confidence by the faith of him."

So highly did the apostle estimate the privilege of drawing near to God through Christ that he groups together to express it the three substantives, "boldness," "access," and "confidence," nor are they tautological, but each expresses a shade of meaning different from the rest. If the original word for "boldness" were literally rendered, it would be "all-speaking," and would show that believers have a permission to say in the presence of God all they wish to say concerning themselves and others. This agrees with the word of Christ. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." John xv. 7. The word "access" might be rendered "a bringing to" a person or place. Here it means a bringing to God, and implies a Person who brings us to him. This Person is Jesus Christ the Mediator, who brings believers to the Father that they may speak their mind to him. He has the right and

ability to bring any person who applies to him for the purpose, nor has he ever refused to show this kindness to any one who comes to him for the purpose. In reward of his work he was exalted by his Father to discharge that duty. Though it is great condescension on his part to serve sinners in this matter, he regards himself as honoured by every one who applies to him. Thus we see that no one who hears the gospel has any excuse for neglecting to come to God; for Christ is willing and able to attend to all who employ him. The word, "confidence," is not used here in the sense of presumption, but of trust arising from faith in Christ. Indeed, trust forms an element of saving faith, and distinguishes it from that natural belief with which many professors are satisfied.

III. Notice those referred to here as instructed by the church in the wisdom of God. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."

1. Their titles are "principalities and powers in heavenly places."

They are high in rank as rulers in high places, yea, the highest places under God. They are in the heavens that are above all other heavens, that is, the highest or third heaven, or as the apostle Paul calls it, "Paradise." 2 Cor. xiii. 2, 4. Though the angelic

potentates are great in understanding, they study "the manifold wisdom of God" as displayed in the plan of redemption as it is exhibited in the church, so that their knowledge therein increases from age to age. Into the salvation proclaimed in the gospel they "desire to look." 1 Peter i. 12. The intimation of a coming Redeemer that was given to our first parents was to the angels a new revelation of the attributes of God. They knew before that he was holy, wise, just, and good, but they did not know his mercy towards the sinful, nor his compassion on the miserable. When they saw justice exercised on the rebel angels, they could not expect that God would show mercy to fallen man until it was announced by himself. During the Old Testament dispensation the institutions of Divine worship appointed by God were no doubt to them subjects of interesting investigation. They earnestly watched God's treatment of ancient saints, and with pleasure attended upon them as ministering spirits. The angel Gabriel with great joy came to Mary with the message of the incarnation, and greatly admired the honour done to her in being chosen of God as the mother of the human nature of his Son. When Christ was born, a host of angels was seen in the neighbouring fields singing the joyful anthem: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Luke ii. 14. They watched the development of the human powers of Jesus, and waited earnestly during the period of his

private life. At last they saw him openly installed in his office when John baptized him, and saw him led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. They were, we may suppose, spectators of the conflict, and joyfully ministered to him when it was over. With holy pleasure they saw the defeat of Satan by a man, and regarded Christ's victory as an earnest of his further triumphs over him. By that victory the devil was brought into subjection to the God-man, so that his influence over men became limited to what the conqueror would permit. From that day they saw Christ, though in a state of humiliation, pursuing a victorious career over the malignant powers of darkness; demons, in obedience to his orders, had forthwith to leave the victims whom they abused. They heard his instructions with admiration of his wisdom. They saw his great agony in Gethsemane with amazement, and at its close, one of them was employed to comfort him. They watched him when a prisoner in the hands of wicked men, they followed him to the hall of the high priest, to the palace where Herod lodged during his stay in Jerusalem, to Pilate's judgment hall, to the cross, and followed his body to the sepulchre. These humbling circumstances they viewed with wonder; but with great joy they saw him rise on the morning of the third day. Forty days thereafter they beheld him ascending to heaven, and took part in the triumphal procession. They saw him exalted on the right hand of God "far

above all principality, and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." They saw that "all things are put under his feet," and that he is "given to be the head over all things to the church." Eph. i. 21, 22.

2. The angels are instructed by men, for it is by the church that they know "the manifold wisdom of God."

As they watched in Old Testament days God's proceedings on behalf of his people, so they do in New Testament times, with greater intelligence, admire the wisdom displayed in the management of affairs for the good of the church. We are safe in saying that they learn much concerning the mysteries of the gospel, and the experience of God's children from men who speak of them to each other, particularly from the ministers of Christ when they preach his unsearchable riches. It is not at all to be doubted that they attend the public assemblies of the saints, listen to the gospel with the closest attention, and increase in the knowledge of it by the instructions imparted to the people.

Reflections :

1. If the angels are so much interested in the preaching of the gospel, much more should we be, for it concerns us more than it does them. It offers to us a salvation which they do not need. It is also the means

of our sanctification, whereas they are holy already. Considering that assemblies for public worship consist of principalities and powers, as well as human creatures, there are no more honourable gatherings on earth than they are; how infatuated then are those who show by their neglect of them that they despise them? But there are more than men and angels present, for God himself is there to meet those who desire his favour, that he may bestow such gifts as he sees to be suitable to each.

2. Those who reject Christ declare thereby that the wisdom of God is foolishness. Let sinners who hear the gospel, but who refuse to accept the salvation offered, consider the wicked unreasonableness of their unbelief. Seeing Christ is waiting to bring sinners unto the presence of God to obtain blessings from him, believers should joyfully employ him daily. To sinners we declare that he is waiting to present them to his Father at the throne of grace, that they may obtain forgiveness of sin. Accept then, reader, his offered services, that you may be admitted into the favour of God.

DISCOURSE XXVI.

THE TENDENCY OF TRIBULATION.

Eph. iii. 13: "Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory."

IN the discharge of the duties of the office to which he had been appointed by Christ, the apostle encountered much opposition from the enemies of the gospel. The afflictions which he endured were calculated to discourage those who embraced the religious principles that he preached, seeing that the profession of them exposed them to persecution. To remove the depressing effects of these considerations, he referred to the valuable privileges secured to believers; for they have boldness and access to God with confidence by faith in Jesus Christ. "Wherefore," says he, "I desire ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory."

1. Notice the apostle's tribulations.

1. They were many and severe.

When after his conversion he began to preach the gospel in Damascus the unbelieving Jews, in their wicked determination to kill him, prevailed on "the governor under Aretas the king to keep the city of the Damas-

ences with a garrison, desirous to apprehend" him; but he "was let down in a basket by the wall, and escaped his hands." 2 Cor. xi. 32, 33. When he returned to Jerusalem, it was with difficulty that the believers there were prevailed upon to receive him into the fellowship of the church, for such was their distrust of him that his services were not at all acceptable to them. On that occasion God commended him, when "in a trance" in the temple, to "make haste, and get quickly out of Jerusalem," because they would not receive his testimony, and to go "unto the Gentiles." Acts xxii. 17, 18, 21. In Antioch, in Pisidia, "the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts." Acts xiii. 50. In Iconium, "the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren." And "the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles. And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews, to use them despitefully, and to stone them, they were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe." Acts xiv. 2, 4-6. While they were in Lystra, "there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people; and having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead." Acts xiv. 19. He recovered, however, and went to Derbe, where he

preached with success. When, in Philippi, Paul, in the name of Christ, expelled the evil spirit from a young sorceress, and her masters seeing "that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught himself and Silas, and drew them into the market place unto the rulers, and brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely: who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks." Acts xvi. 19-24. From Thessalonica, owing to a tumult caused by the Jews, "Paul and Silas" were compelled to flee "by night to Berea." Acts xvii. 10. From Berea, as the Jews followed them there, Paul went secretly to Athens, where, with considerable danger, he disputed with the philosophers. He afterwards went to Corinth, where the Jews, as usual, opposed him with blasphemy. When they rejected the gospel, "he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles." Acts xviii. 6. Afterwards "the Jews made insurrection with one accord against him, and brought him to the judgment

seat, saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law." Acts xviii. 12, 13. In Ephesus his life was put in great peril by the tumult caused by Demetrius, the silversmith, as recorded in Acts xix. When sometime thereafter he visited Jerusalem, the Jews "saw him in the temple, and stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him." Acts xxi. 27. They would have killed him had not the chief captain of the Roman troops rescued him. He was, however, detained a prisoner. To save him from a conspiracy to take his life, made by over forty fanatics, he was sent by night to Cæsarea, guarded by a company of soldiers. There he remained in bonds for some years, until at last the governor, to please the Jews, proposed to him to go to Jerusalem to be tried there; but he, knowing that, if he went, he would be in danger of assassination, appealed to Cæsar. On the voyage to Italy he encountered a severe tempest, wherein the ship was lost at Melita. He was kept prisoner at Rome for some years, but it is believed that he obtained his liberty. If he did, he was again imprisoned and put to death. He sums up his many trials in the following words; "Are they ministers of Christ? I am more: in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one, thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and

a day I have been in the deep ; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." 2 Cor. xi. 23-27.

2. The causes of Paul's afflictions.

The heathens persecuted him because he preached a religion which they understood to be uncompromisingly antagonistic to their own idolatry : Pagan priests saw that, as their influence over the people was in danger through the gospel, their livelihood was imperilled. The rulers were led to believe that the religion preached by Paul would make the people seditious, as their respect for the gods would be weakened if not destroyed thereby. For these reasons the magistrates were easily induced to persecute the Christians, particularly the preachers of the gospel. The unbelieving Jews so much hated the very name of Jesus of Nazareth that their feelings were greatly exasperated by finding that Gentiles were admitted to the privileges of the people of God on equal terms with Jewish believers. On account of Paul's position as the apostle of the Gentiles, he was peculiarly obnoxious to them, and they were more bitterly opposed to him than to any other apostle. When the chief captain, who had rescued him

from their violence in Jerusalem, gave him leave to address the crowd, they quietly listened to his account of his youth, education, conversion, and preaching, until he spoke of the Lord's orders when he appeared to him as he was in a trance in the temple, and said, "Depart ; for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." When they heard that they became furious, and "lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth ; for it is not fit that he should live. And they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air." Acts xxii. 22, 23. He had good reason to say to the Ephesians that his "tribulations" were for them. Like every faithful preacher, he was so warmly attached to the people for whose benefit he laboured by the appointment of Christ that no ill usage could destroy his affection for them. If you speak to a devoted missionary you may discover that he sees something more attractive in the people to whom he preaches Christ than he sees in any others ; and the same is true of all true pastors in Christian lands ; for in their hearts their own congregations have a place that no other people can have. This is a law established by God for valuable purposes.

3. We observe, however, that the natural tendency of tribulation is to cause discouragement and shame.

A man advocates some principles, or engages in some enterprise, either for himself or for the benefit of others : if successful he is honoured, and feels at least

that he has no cause to be ashamed ; but if, on the other hand, he meets with opposition, defeats, and various other troubles in the prosecution of the undertaking, he is apt to become disheartened, and his followers, for whose benefit he acts, naturally become dispirited, so that unless they are convinced that the principles maintained are sound, and the desired end is more than worth all the toil that must be undergone to secure it, they will give up the contest. Many forsake a good cause on account of difficulties, when they do not appreciate its worth. In all ages many have professed faith in Christ, and attachment to the gospel, who, by their defection on meeting with trouble on its account, or on seeing others afflicted for its sake, proved that they never knew the truth savingly. These are represented in the parable of the sower by the stony ground, where the seed grew rapidly ; but when the sun arose, it was scorched, and withered away. When Christ fed the multitude with five barley loaves and two small fishes, they were disposed to proclaim him their king ; but, the next day, when he explained to them the nature of his kingdom, those who did not intelligently appreciate it ceased from following him, because they discovered that he was not going to pursue the only course whereby, as they thought, Israel could be saved. Losing their confidence in him, they were mortified for adhering to him so long. All his disciples, except a few, were ashamed of him when he

was condemned and crucified. Christ himself, "for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame," and all his faithful followers act in a similar spirit, and glory in the cross of Christ, though it was the greatest dishonour that could be done to any person. As many are offended at the cross, so were many offended at the afflictions of the apostle, and knowing that the Ephesians were exposed to the same danger, he earnestly exhorted them not to be disheartened by his afflictions on their behalf. "I desire that ye faint not at my tribulation for you." The passage might be rendered, "I beseech that ye do not become cowards on account of my tribulations for you, which is your glory."

II. Notice the antidote to fainting on account of the tribulations of the gospel.

1. It is Christ who appoints us to our position and work in the gospel.

This is true of every sincere follower of Christ; for as he is called by a Divine call, and appointed to a particular department of the work of Christ, it is his part to rely on his Master in all circumstances. He should not for a moment entertain the thought of leaving his post, though his position may be trying and dangerous. The position of honest Christians may be very painful when serious doubts of their appointment by Christ to the situations which they occupy may

arise in their minds, or when they question their effectual calling even to discipleship. Some professors may not know anything of this sore exercise, but many believers have so distressing an experience of it, that they are often brought to the verge of concluding that it is better for them to withdraw from their standing in the Church. They think that if the Lord had placed them where they are, he would not leave them to be so tried. He understands their condition, and sympathizes with their infirmities; for he "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Heb. iv. 15. His own human nature shrank with horror from the sufferings which were coming upon him, and he prayed three times to the Father, that if it were possible the cup should pass from him. Whatever a man's situation is in connection with the cause of Christ, he is there in the providence of God either by his permission or call. It is, therefore, his duty not to withdraw from the work of Christ, but to rely on him for grace to enable him to discharge his duty. It is also the part of his brethren to encourage him. Whether the apostle passed through such sore exercises as these we are not informed; but when writing the words of my text, as he had no misgivings with regard to his own appointment, he explicitly avows his own confidence in the goodness of the cause which he advocated, in order that the Ephesians might not in a cowardly spirit turn from the gospel, though he was in tribulation on account of it.

2. The excellence of the cause in which believers are embarked may well encourage them.

Because it is the cause of truth, no amount of affliction endured in maintaining and advancing it can prove it to be evil. When we ascertain that the principles we uphold are agreeable to the word of God, we should stand by them, no matter to what trouble they may expose us. They may be so unpopular that ourselves may be treated with pity and scorn for holding views that are opposed by the majority of the community, or at least by those who regard themselves as liberal, intelligent, and abreast of the spirit of the age. As an example, we may refer to the agitation made by so many to legalize marriage with a deceased wife's sister. Besides, that after careful examination of the Scriptures on the subject, we are satisfied that such marriages are forbidden, we have the consensus of all the churches of Christ against it since the days of the apostles. In opposing departures from Scriptural principles, we may be considered narrow and illiberal, but we must stand by the truth at all risks, whatever other men may think or say.

3. Seeing that Christians enjoy valuable privileges through the gospel, it ill becomes them to faint because they suffer affliction on account of it. By faith they have "boldness and access" to God "with confidence." They have liberty to draw near to him with trust, and to speak their mind to him with freedom concerning all their affairs. Of this liberty the apostle availed

himself, for he says : " For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth are named."

4. Believers have a glorious hope. They have an assurance that the kingdom of Christ shall triumph over all its enemies with all the obstacles that can be thrown in its way, and that they who adhere to the gospel will partake in the glory of Christ and of the saints. At the final victory no follower of the Lord will regret all the tribulations which he had endured for him in this world, for he will find that they worked for him "an exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

From this let us learn not to be discouraged when in the path of duty. The practical question is, What the Lord would have us do? Having ascertained his will, as we certainly may, if sincere, let us engage in it with cheerfulness and confidence. People, through fear of suffering, may forsake Christ and his cause, but by doing this, they expose themselves to everlasting misery. To avoid this dismal end let us seek to know him, that we may affectionately trust that he will sustain us in his service by his grace in all circumstances.

DISCOURSE XXVII.

THE FAMILY OF GOD.

Eph. iii. 14, 15: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."

HERE the apostle resumes the statement interrupted by the parenthesis extending from the first to the close of the thirteenth verse. The connection is: Because you, Ephesians, through your becoming partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, are admitted to all the privileges of the children of God, being "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus, Christ for you Gentiles, bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."

In this prayer we have the man who offered it, the Person to whom it was offered, and the blessings

asked; but we will in this discourse confine our attention to the Person to whom it was offered, God the Father, and to the family named after him.

1. Notice the Person to whom the apostle offered this prayer.

1. His relation to our Lord Jesus Christ. "I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Seeing Christ is said to be "without father and without mother," how then is God, or any one else, his father? As he has two natures in one person, things are affirmed of him which belong to one nature, but not to the other. As man he had no human father, and as God he had no mother, but the human nature of him who is a Divine person had a mother, and he himself called God his Father, and God declared him to be his "only begotten Son." God is the Father of Christ in such a way that Christ is God's own Son. "God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh." Rom. viii. 3. "He that spared not his own Son." Rom. viii. 32. When he openly declared God to be his Father, the Jews correctly understood the claim to imply equality with God, and "sought to kill him, because he said that God was his father, making himself equal with God." John v. 18. He is distinct from all others as the Son of God; rational creatures are sons of God in virtue of creation in the image of God, but he in virtue of eternal generation. That he is the

Son of God essentially is a fundamental element of the gospel. He was "made of the seed of David according to the flesh," was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Rom. i. 3, 4. "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name." John 88. 31. The truth to be believed is that Christ is the Son of God, and no man can, therefore, have life without this faith. God is also the Father of Christ as he is "the Son of man." "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" Peter's answer was, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." This answer was correct, for "Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Mat. xvi. 13, 16, 17. As man he is not the Son of God in virtue of creation, nor by adoption as believers are, but in virtue of the union of his human nature to his Person. It is not either nature but the Person of Christ that is the Son of God. The humanity of Christ is not a person, but a nature subsisting from the beginning of its existence in the personality of the eternal Son of God.

2. God's relation to his people.

He is their Father, seeing that they are called the family named after him. They are not his children

essentially as Christ is his Son, but his children by regeneration and adoption; and Christ is not only their covenant head, but also their life and King. For this reason he is properly called "our Lord Jesus Christ."

II. Notice the family. "Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."

This passage is supposed by some to refer both to ransomed men and holy angels, but though the latter form an important section of the family of God, it may be doubted whether the apostle had them in view when he wrote these words. In this epistle we meet with several allusions to this family with its privileges, and we find that the union of Jews and Gentiles in one body is prominently set forth in it. To this remodelled and enlarged community he properly gives the name of "family." It is such a household that, though united by bonds that cannot be broken, there are great diversities in it, for—

1. Its members differ in condition.

Some are living on earth, but many of them have gone to heaven to their Father's house, where they rest from their labour—and see his face. There, in free intercourse with God, they behold his glory in such brightness as would overpower their nature while they were in this world. They have all the happiness of which they are capable, for all their desires are

gratified. They have communion with holy angels and saints without a shade of distrust; for there no one offends or is offended. All proud bearing, contemptuous treatment, and suspicions are excluded. "The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars" are not admitted to disturb the holy harmony of the community. The interest of believers on earth in that habitation of blessedness is much increased by the consideration that dear relatives are there, and that they are perhaps looking for the arrival of friends left behind in this world.

2. They differ with respect to nationality.

Because God's children are of various races and countries, they exhibit characteristics that are peculiar to themselves and their respective kindreds. There is the stolid Red Indian, the imitative Chinaman, the subtle Hindoo, the lethargic Turk, the excitable Negro, the shrewd descendant of Jacob, with his talent for traffic, the speculative German, the æsthetic Italian, with his pleasure in the fine arts, the practical Anglo-Saxon, the chivalrous Celt, including the volatile Frenchman, the Welshman, so firmly attached to the language of his ancestors, the light-hearted, affectionate, impulsive and witty Irishman, and the loyal Scottish Highlanders. With all these natural diversities they are one in faith, hope, and charity.

3. This difference of origin, race, education, and

character renders it difficult to harmonize their sentiments and tastes; it therefore leads to further diversities of religious manifestations and ecclesiastical organizations. Among the people of God we find distinct types of religion in different countries. In one place you find cheerful piety without sanctimoniousness, in another place it is grave without levity, in another it is mystical, in another it is ritualistic, in another Scriptural. In all places you find a weak tendency to some error or another. If these different dispositions and tastes have not given rise to schisms, they greatly help to perpetuate them. We discover peculiar manifestations of spiritual life in every church; true piety in the Episcopal Church is amiable, in the Baptist churches it is exclusive, in the Congregational churches it is self-assertive, in Methodism it is demonstrative, in Presbyterianism it is intellectual, and what godliness there may be in Catholicism it is submissive to sacerdotal authority, but so buried in error that it is hard to discover its existence. This sketch is so general that it fails to describe the distinctive characteristics of each party accurately; but many such diversities are among the people of God, for no two agree in all things.

4. There are diversities in spiritual experience; for some are strong in faith, because the Holy Ghost has so enlightened their minds in the knowledge of God, that they have confidence in his love and faith-

fulness ; they are so satisfied with the character and work of Christ that they have stable hope whereby they rise above the circumstances which influence weak believers ; while, on the other hand, the knowledge of the fundamental principles of Christianity possessed by some is so obscure, and their spiritual conceptions so dim, that they labour under such uncertainty as to produce much discomfort in their minds. Some are joyful, others are sad ; some are hopeful, others are despondent ; some are active, others are quiet. In a word, there are innumerable diversities both in character and circumstances. This variety gives the family of God all the greater interest, for without it a tame uniformity would prevail, individuality would be lost in the mass, and the glory of God would not be so eminently displayed, nor would each member of his family have so many objects of admiration. By nature one was stubborn and self-willed, one impetuous and rash, one proud and ambitious, one sagacious and keen in business, one gentle and yielding, and one cautious and timid ; but grace purifies these various traits of character without destroying them, and makes them the ornaments of their possessors. However much one may regard individual peculiarities as defects in the church on earth, and even hindrances to its prosperity, we do not regret that in heaven there is a meek Moses, a patient Job, a devout David, a wise Solomon, a once despondent Heman, an impulsive Peter, an amiable

John, a resolute Paul, and every possible shade of distinctive character. If the bow of heaven were all one colour, however bright, it would be comparatively dull and uninteresting. In the heavenly family there are diversities in harmonious unity.

5. Notwithstanding these diversities in the family of God there is a real unity.

(1) The original state of each member of it was the same. At first they were all guilty sinners under sentence of condemnation to eternal punishment, nor could they satisfy justice so as to escape. Besides this, they were unable to reform their lives, because they could not purify their own polluted hearts. Though God's creatures, they were not sons but aliens. They yielded willing obedience to Satan, and were slaves in the kingdom of darkness. Their first state is vividly described by the apostle when he says that they "were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein they walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also they all had their conversation in time past in the lusts of their flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath even as others." Eph. ii. 1-3.

(2) They are all born of God. In connection with the word, the Holy Ghost quickened, renewed, persuaded, and enabled them to embrace Jesus Christ

freely offered to them in the gospel. In a word, they are born again, and on that account they are the children of God, having received their spiritual life from him. Being thus regenerated and enabled to rest on Christ by faith, whereby they are united to him legally and vitally, they are justified, their sins are forgiven, and they have a title to the rights acquired for them by Christ.

(3) To render their sonship legal and secure, God adopted them into his family by a paternal act of free grace. They are constituted sons of God, and heirs jointly with Jesus Christ. Because his righteousness is imputed to them, there is no condemnation to any of them. They have a title to the same inheritance, and it equally belongs to them all. The Spirit of the Son is given to them to dwell in their hearts, that he may strengthen the filial affections which were implanted in them in regeneration.

(4) They are named after the same Divine Person. Whether the apostle means the Father or Jesus Christ is disputed by expositors; but as children naturally derive their name from their father, we conclude that the family name of believers is that of "Sons of God," the most honourable designation in the universe. Being then the children of God, they are the royal princes of heaven. They are called "Israel" in Scripture, which means "Prince of God" or "Warrior Prince of God." This high title belongs to each of them. On account

of their relationship to Jesus Christ they are called Christians, and this led some to suppose that it is after Christ the family is named. Though the followers of Christ were called by that name in Antioch before this epistle was written, there is no evidence that it was yet used by themselves as their common designation. Paul does not use it in any of his epistles, but commonly calls them "saints." It is doubtful if he here intended any one name, but simply the filial relation of believers to God, their fraternal relation to Christ, and the unity of the family.

(5) In this family there are common features of character; each is interested in the honour of the father and the welfare of the household. Before they were born again and adopted, they did not heartily acknowledge their obligations to God; but since, notwithstanding many serious defects, they desire to glorify him by hearty obedience, and for his sake they love the brethren. As they realize their union to Christ, their attachment to his people becomes warmer, so that whatever differences may exist among them, brotherly love continues. The old spirit of malice, jealousy, and envy, though not entirely eradicated, is at least broken, condemned, and held under restraint, so that instead of finding pleasure in observing the faults of their brethren, they desire to hide them. They have the "charity that suffereth long and is kind, that envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave

itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. 1 Cor. xiii. 4-7. When they recognize the image of Christ in their brethren it affords them real satisfaction, and forms a powerful bond of union between them. The recognition of a beloved brother or other near relative, after a separation of many years, is not more joyful than the discovery of the features of the family of God in a friend or neighbour. Not only do the members of the household of God know each other as such, but the world, with all its disposition to deny it, knows them also. Sinners use much ingenuity to convince themselves that there is no godliness in the world, not at least in their own neighbourhood, because the excellence of believers disturbs their carnal security; and therefore, to weaken the conviction caused by their devoutness, worth, and sincerity, they watch for their inconsistencies and magnify them into enormous crimes. They misrepresent their good deeds, and declare that their motives are selfish and hypocritical. It is much to be regretted that God's children often suspect the sincerity of each other, for such a spirit, when cherished, destroys the harmony that should prevail among them. It hinders the success of the church in her various enterprises, tends to her dissolution and arrests their own growth in grace.

Reflections :

1. Believers should realize their relationship to God as his children. They owe it to him that they should intelligently appreciate his goodness and grace. It is very unseemly that children should avoid their parents until they become unable to recognize them as such. Alas! God's children often, through their own want of affection, cannot know God as their Father. Well may it grieve his Spirit when this is the case. God is angry with the wicked, but his own people grieve him by their lack of communion with him, nor can they be comfortable or useful when this is the case. While they regard him only as a judge, they cannot serve him affectionately, nor can their obedience afford them any pleasure because, it is rendered in a slavish spirit. Faith, in his general benevolence, may relieve their minds temporarily, but they can have no solid satisfaction until, by true faith, they come to him as their Father in Christ.

2. God offers to adopt you, sinners, that you may have the position of children in his family. If you renounce your own righteousness, turn from your sins, and accept the righteousness of Christ, he will justify and adopt you. If you heartily consent to that proposal he will receive and bless you, but if you still refuse, he may in judgment leave you to the delusions of your own vain thoughts to perish at last in your sins.

DISCOURSE XXVIII.

THE APOSTLE'S PRAYER FOR THE EPHESIANS.

Eph. iii. 16-19: "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

THE apostle addressed this prayer to God under the interesting title of "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named," and asked that he would strengthen the Ephesians "with might by his Spirit in the inner man," that Christ might dwell in their hearts, and that "rooted and grounded in love," they might comprehend the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ, and also know it experimentally, that they might "be filled with all the fulness of God."

1. Notice the first blessing asked. "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."

1. He prayed for the strengthening of "the inner man."

By "the inner man" the apostle does not mean the higher powers of the soul; the reason and spirit; nor does he pray that these by their natural force may overcome the evil tendency of the lower powers and lusts of the flesh. This view is extensively entertained by Armenians; but the truth is, that the whole soul is affected by original sin, and therefore the natural man is thereby disabled to do any spiritual good. The conflict of which the Scriptures speak is not between the higher and lower powers of the soul, but between the old and new man, that is, between our depraved nature and the spiritual principle communicated by the Holy Ghost. This is evident from Scripture and experience. "For I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now, if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man." Rom. vii. 18-22. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that

is spiritual judgeth all things." 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15. In the passage, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other," the Spirit does not mean the higher powers of the soul, but the Holy Ghost dwelling in believers. By the inner man, therefore, it is not to be understood the soul as opposed to the body, or the rational as opposed to the sensual principles, but the spiritual life created by the power of God; the product of "the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power." Eph. i. 19. No unrenewed person has "the inner man." It is, therefore, for true believers that the apostle asks this power.

2. He who strengthens "the inner man" is the Holy Ghost. "That he would grant you . . . to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."

Whatever instruments God may employ for the edification and comfort of his people, no created agency can strengthen "the inner man," no preacher, however enlightened, can do it, nor can the word of God accomplish it; for it is done by the Spirit in the exercise of "the exceeding greatness of his power, . . . which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." Eph. i. 19, 20. This being the case, it sounds like blasphemy to hear some people, in pre-

fane ignorance, say that "the inner man" is strengthened by material food.

3. The measure according to which God imparts this strength is "the riches of his glory." Instead of acting in this matter according to our contracted ideas, he acts in a manner that is worthy of himself. This is an ample assurance to believers that whatever strength they need for receiving needed blessings, for the discharge of duties, and for withstanding their enemies, it shall be abundantly bestowed upon them. God who has inexhaustible resources, is unbounded in his liberality. We may form some notion of "the riches of his glory" when we consider his wealth, and bounty towards the teeming millions of creatures in this world that are supported by him in life and activity. To the ravens and young lions that cry to him, he giveth their food in due season. If he thus provides for the wants of the animal creation, much more shall he provide for those to whom he gave his own Son to save them by his death.

II. Notice the second blessing asked. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."

1. That Christ may dwell in the heart as meant by the apostle, "the inner man" must be strengthened by the Spirit; for natural men are too weak to receive him, and many of the children of God are yet so feeble that, though Christ is in them, they cannot bear very

powerful manifestations of his presence. For the reason not a few of them through darkness are in doubt concerning their interest in Christ. They faintly desire communion with him, but they are so seldom sensible of it that they fear they are not yet on friendly terms with him as reconciled to him.

2. Christ dwells in the hearts of his people. God fills immensurably, but he is said to dwell in those places where he is graciously pleased to reveal his glory, goodness, and love. In this way he dwells in heaven. "Unto thee lift I mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens." Ps. cxxxiii. 1. He dwelt among the children of Israel. "Defile not the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I dwell; for I the Lord dwell among the children of Israel." Num. xxxv. 34. He dwells in Zion. "Sing praises to the Lord, which dwelleth in Zion." Ps. ix. 11. He dwells with him that is humble and contrite. "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." Isa. lvii. 15. He dwells in his people. "Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them." 2 Cor. vi. 16. Sometimes God is said to dwell in his people as stated in the last passage cited, sometimes the Spirit of God, called also the Spirit of Christ, is said to dwell in their hearts, and sometimes, as in our text, Christ is said to dwell in them. "But ye are not in

the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Rom. viii. 9. "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin." Rom. viii. 10. In virtue of the unity of the Divine essence, where one Person of the Godhead dwells, the other Persons dwell there likewise, so that "he that hath seen the Son hath seen the Father," and "he that hath the Son hath the Father." Where the Spirit of God is, there God is; and where the Spirit of Christ is, there Christ is.

3. Christ dwells in the hearts of his people by faith.

Christ dwells in the hearts of believers, but faith is not always active in them. It is for them in whom Christ is that the apostle prays that he may dwell in their hearts by faith. That means ability to see Christ by faith, so that a living vision of him may be in the mind and heart. He prays not that he may really dwell in them, for this he does already, but that they may by faith see that he dwells in them. Christ is in his people always, whether faith be active or not. When a man faints the more manifest operations of his soul are suspended, but the soul dwells in him notwithstanding. Though faith be in a swoon, yet Christ may act in the soul in many ways. If Christ's works in us were limited to the realization by faith of his presence, it would be a sad case for us; for he carries on a thousand operations in us in which faith has no part.

The hearts of the two disciples going to Emmaus burned within them as Christ opened the Scriptures, though they did not know him. Their faith was so stunned by his crucifixion that they could not believe that he was alive. Their unbelief prevented them from recognizing him as he walked along with them, and conversed with them. Christ dwells in us and works when we do not know that it is he; but here the apostle prays that the Ephesians might realize his presence, and see him as he worked in them. When his presence is not observed, though his people are safe, yet they cannot be comfortable. It must also be understood that faith has much more to do with Christ than to rest on him for justification; it lays hold on him for sanctification, growth in grace, spiritual light, joy, and many other things. None, however, but those who have justifying faith can look to Christ for other blessings. When the indwelling of Christ is realized, a transforming effect is produced in the soul. When the veil of ignorance is removed from our hearts, "we, with an unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. iii. 18.

III. Notice the third blessing asked. "That ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ."

1. To have good understanding of the love of Christ we must be rooted and grounded in love.

The love referred to here is not the love of God to us, but our love as a Christian grace. Though its object is not specified, it means our love to God and to the brethren. It is a fruit of the indwelling of Christ in our hearts by faith. The apostle prayed that Christ might so dwell in the hearts of the Ephesians, that, by his operations and gracious influences, their love to him and to one another should so increase as to obtain an ascendancy over their understanding and affections, so that the whole "inner man" might be so strengthened that as a well-rooted tree, or as a building whose foundation was laid on a rock, they might stand firm against all the forces that might bear against them to overthrow them.

2. This establishment in the grace of Christian love is necessary to a satisfactory progress in the knowledge of the love of Christ. Unless we are strengthened by the Spirit in "the inner man," unless Christ dwells in our hearts, and unless we are rooted and grounded in love, we cannot have a comfortable apprehension of the gospel, or of the love of Christ revealed therein. For this reason the apostle prays that the readers of the epistle may be strengthened so as to have power to comprehend the great things of which he wrote. He does not mean that they may be able to understand them in all their extent, seeing they

are infinite, but that they may correctly know their nature and worth, though their minds cannot embrace the whole. He wishes us to understand that the subject is infinite in breadth, length, depth, and height.

IV. Notice the fourth blessing asked. "That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able . . . to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."

1. Experimental knowledge of spiritual things accompanies spiritual illumination. When the Holy Ghost renews the will and enlightens the mind to see and appreciate the love of Christ, it produces a response in the heart. It is different from the speculative knowledge of natural men, which leaves the heart dead as before. In their case their acquirements make them proud, and they fail to produce love to Christ or to his people. If we savingly know the love of Christ, it has caused repentance, humility, and affectionate attachment to Christ, to his people, and to his interests; we desire to know more of it, and we long to feel its power, that by it we may become like Christ. This effect manifests itself in our obedience to the will of God, and in efforts to honour him in our lives. The cause of Christ on earth has become so interesting to us that we put forth some efforts to advance it. When his kingdom prospers we rejoice, and when its progress is retarded we are grieved. In these and

similar ways the experimental knowledge of the love of Christ reveals itself in his people.

2. Though the love of Christ is infinite, and no created mind can comprehend it, yet it may be savingly known. It passes knowledge, inasmuch as his affections are infinite, and his condescension so great as to cause him who was "in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God," to make "himself of no reputation, and to take upon him the form of a servant, and to be made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Phil. ii. 6-8. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." John xv. 13. The Son of God lay down his life for his enemies, not because he needed them to add to his infinite blessedness, but, because of his own generous kindness, he loved them with an everlasting love. This great love has secured for its objects blessings that are beyond our comprehension, and that we shall never be able to estimate at their full value. He has exercised patient forbearance toward us far more than the most affectionate parents have ever done toward their disobedient children; he has provided for us necessary comforts during our life time, and, if his people, he has administered grace to us, not merely to the extent of our petitions, but far beyond our requests, and even our knowledge of our necessities.

V. Notice the fifth blessing asked. "That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

The standard of Christian attainment is to be filled with the fulness of God. This cannot be reached in this world, but believers desire the perfection for which they are destined. The apostle himself earnestly strove after this. "Brethren," says he, "I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Phil. iii. 13, 14. The disciples of Christ believe that God will communicate to them out of the fulness of his excellencies all that they can contain of his goodness. They shall be filled to the utmost, like vessels of various capacities which might be plunged into the mighty ocean, and then each would contain all it could hold. Then every holy desire (and there will be no other), shall be satisfied for ever and ever. All of them shall "come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," and shall know even as also they are known. They are "predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son." Rom. viii. 29.

Reflections :

1. If we are the children of God we are not yet satisfied with the attainments which we have made

but are striving after conformity with Christ. If sincere believers, such broken views as we may have of his indwelling in our hearts stir us up to seek more satisfactory realization of his presence. If we experience the influence of his love, we desire to know it more perfectly, and feel it with greater power.

2. Those who are satisfied with the progress they have made, have reason to conclude that they are not the subjects of grace, but merely professors who have not yet faith for justification, much less for sanctification and growth in grace.

3. You, in whose heart Christ does not dwell either by faith or in any other gracious manner, pray to him to enter it. He stands at your door and knocks, and if you are willing to admit him he "will come in and sup with you, and you with him."

DISCOURSE XXIX.

GOD GLORIFIED IN THE CHURCH—DOXOLOGY, NO. 2.

Eph. iii. 20, 21: "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

WHEN at the close of some meeting during which frivolity and amusement rather than seriousness and devoutness prevailed, the Doxology was sung, you

became painfully sensible of the incongruity of that very exalted act of worship with the preceding levity. When we examine the writings of the apostles we see that, when their minds became so filled with a sense of the excellence of God that they could not find words to express their thoughts, they gave vent to their feelings in exclamations of praise. The heart of Paul was so full of admiration of God's character that he frequently broke out in such utterances. When describing the dishonour done to him by the heathens in their debasing idolatry, with deep feeling, he says that they "changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen." Rom. i. 25. He concluded an enumeration of the privileges of Israel by the words: "Of whom are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." Rom. ix. 5. When he proved that the rejection of the unbelieving Jews, the extension of the blessings of the gospel to the Gentiles, and the future restoration of Israel to the Church of Christ, were in accordance with the purposes of God as intimated in the Scriptures, with deep emotion he says: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him,

and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." Rom. xi. 33-36. At the close of the epistle to the Romans he says: "Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen." Rom. xvi. 25, 27. So strong was his affectionate regard for Christ, that, in contemplating the wicked unreasonableness of indifference to his amiableness, which is manifested by unbelievers, he said with holy indignation: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maran-atha." 1 Cor. xvi. 22. He commences the second epistle to the Corinthians with a doxology. "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort." 2 Cor. i. 3. In closing his exhortation to Christian liberality, he exclaims: "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." 2 Cor. ix. 15. When speaking of his trials he says: "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not." 2 Cor. xi. 31. In the beginning of the epistle to the Galatians he says that "our Lord Jesus Christ gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." Gal. i. 3-5. Near the beginning of the epistle

to the Ephesians there is the doxology : " Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Eph. i. 3. He closes his commendation of the liberality of the Philippians by the words : " Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen." Phil. iv. 20. When he referred to God's mercy to himself, he said : " Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen." 1 Tim. i. 17. He enforces his charge to Timothy by a solemn reference to God : " Who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords : who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto ; whom no man hath seen, nor can see : to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen." 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16. In the close of the epistle to the Hebrews we have the words : " Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." Heb. xiii. 20, 21. Peter was full of admiration of God, and exclaimed, " Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the

resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." 1 Peter i. 3. He exhorts believers so to act "that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ: to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." 1 Peter iv. 11. Again he says: "The God of all grace make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you: to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." 1 Peter v. 10, 11. In closing the second epistle he says: "Grew in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: to him be glory both now and for ever. Amen." 2 Peter iii. 18. Jude says: "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." Jude 24, 25. In the book of Revelations we have, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us, kings and priests unto God and his Father: to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Rev. i. 5, 6. The four living creatures "rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." Rev. iv. 8. "The four-and-twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne saying, Thou art worthy. O Lord to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created

all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." Rev. iv. 10, 11. When the Lamb opened the mysterious book, the living creatures, elders, and all creatures praised and adored him. Rev. vii. 9-12. The company of victors on the sea of glass sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. Rev. xv. 2-4. The people in heaven sing Hallelujah over the destruction of the great whore. Rev. xix. 1-8. Similar songs of praise are frequent in the book of Psalms and in the prophets, and this shows that the Spirit revealed the glory of God to Old Testament saints, so that they could not restrain themselves from uttering their admiration of his character.

Besides this review of so many doxologies sung by the saints, we shall look more minutely into that contained in our text, and consider the person to whom glory is due, and those whereby he is glorified.

- I. Notice the Person to whom this glory is due.
"Now unto him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think by his power unto us glory in the church."

1. He is able to grant the prayers of his people.

In the preceding prayer the apostle asked God to grant unto the Ephesians, "according to his riches in glory, to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man; that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith, and that being rooted and grounded in love

they might be able to comprehend . . . and know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fulness of God." As he had confidence in God's ability to do these things he glorified him by his trust in his power and grace. It is to the honour of God that his people give evidence of their reliance upon him by their prayers and supplications. It is on their part a practical display of their belief of his omnipotence and benevolence. It is a great encouragement to believers to know that the glory of God is involved in answering their prayers offered in the name of Christ.

2. He is not only able to grant our prayers, but also to do exceeding abundantly above what we can ask or think.

It appears that in this prayer Paul reached the limits, not only of his knowledge, but of his imagination also, but that with this he was not satisfied ; because he believed that an immensity lay beyond. He knew that God could not only do all he asked, but infinitely more than he could "ask or think." When he did all he could in prayer, he cast himself on the unlimited greatness of God, in confidence that he would do all that was needed to promote the welfare of his people, as thereby he displays the riches of his own glory. God's power and wisdom ought to be the measure of our desires and expectations rather than our conceptions and petitions. It is well for us that he does not restrict his bounties to our limited notions of them, but imparts

them according to his riches in glory ; for if he used our small measure our state would be for ever imperfect. We should rejoice that we have to do with a God of unbounded generosity, inexhaustible resources, unfailling kindness, unerring wisdom, and almighty power.

3. He works in his people with exceeding great power.

We can form some faint idea of God's power when we consider the mighty energy that he has treasured up in water, for instance. It is a soft and yielding substance that readily gives way before our muscular force, but when a few gallons of it are confined in a strong iron boiler and heated into steam which communicates with suitable machinery, it moves thousands of tons on our iron roads with such ease that in a few minutes a high velocity is attained. This, however, is trifling compared with the display of God's power in the amazing speed with which he causes the ponderous earth whereon we dwell to travel in its orbit round the sun. It makes over six hundred millions of miles in a year, two millions of miles in a day, seventy-five thousand miles in an hour, twelve hundred miles in a minute, and twenty miles in a second ; a velocity so high that the contemplation of it baffles our understanding ; but a greater power still, even the omnipotence of God has employed for his people, and in them. The exceeding greatness of Divine power, which wrought in Christ when God " raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heaven

places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come ; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church," is the same whereby those "who were dead in trespasses and sins were quickened together with Christ, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Though to God things are not more or less difficult, yet the greatest and most glorious displays of his power were made in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, also in the regeneration, justification, pardon, adoption, sanctification, and glorification of believers. What God has done for his people is a pledge of what he will do for them. Those who have been transformed in the spirit of their mind, raised from death to spiritual life, translated from darkness to light, and from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God's dear Son, and in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells, may hope for future glory, and may well join in the doxology :—
"Unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end, Amen."

- II. Notice those whereby God is chiefly glorified.
"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus."

1. The glory of God is most conspicuously displayed in the church.

The works of God in creation and providence show forth the glory of his power, wisdom, and goodness; but the work of redemption reveals his mercy and eternal love to his people, it exhibits his wisdom, justice, power, holiness, and truth in a clearer light than could be made known by all his other acts. Christ will come again unto this earth "to be glorified in the saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." 2 Thes. i. 10. Then the whole universe will see the result of God's redeeming love, wisdom, mercy, and power; for those, who, on account of guilt, were justly condemned to eternal punishment, shall be formally acquitted in the hearing of intelligent creatures, on the ground of the vicarious sufferings of Christ, who shall be then their Judge. Though their nature was altogether polluted by sin, they shall be purified, so that, on that day, they shall be perfectly holy "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Eph. v. 27. The more filthy and debased they were, the greater shall be his glory, who cleansed and raised them. God will be so satisfied with them that he "will rest in his love, and joy over them with singing." Zeph. iii. 17. Holy angels will admire them, whereas wicked men and devils will be mortified to see the objects of their hatred, whom they sought to destroy, advanced to honour and everlasting blessedness. Together with

Christ their Head they shall enjoy God, and "shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

2. Not only shall the glory of God be exhibited in the church, but his people shall actively render glory to him. They have peculiar advantages for doing this; for the church is the body of Christ wherein he dwells, and, therefore, animates every member of it by his Spirit to discharge his duty with a view to glorify God and show forth his praises. None but the redeemed can make the honour of God the supreme object of their desire, nor can they themselves do this but in the measure in which they are sustained by grace. In this life they glorify God by rendering hearty obedience to his will, trusting in his mercy and faithfulness, suffering in his cause, and testifying on his behalf against the ungodliness that prevails in the world. Though in the deadly conflict with evil they often do not appear to make much progress, yet they shall be "more than conquerors through him who loves them." Though they wrestle "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places," yet they are enabled to stand in the evil day, and to overcome their enemies; for "the LORD is their light and salvation, and the strength of their life." Ps. xxvii. 1.

3. The church shall never cease to glorify God. "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end."

The apostle, not able to find words adequate to the full expression of his thoughts, heaps together terms to give vent to his mind. Because the subject of his contemplation and aspirations were too large for utterance, he was forced to use such words as he could, though he knew that they were but faint shadows of the realities that were revealed to his spirit. When the ransomed shall finish their labours in this world they shall not cease to praise God, but begin, with enlarged powers invigorated by the Spirit of God, to proclaim his glory, and shall continue to do so without weariness for ever and ever. As eternal ages roll on they shall discover fresh wonders in the character of God, and will always recollect causes of admiration of him on account of his treatment of them while preparing them for their exalted position. The doxology will never lose its interest and sweetness to them.

Practical observations :

1. Though many who are ignorant of God and the glory due unto his name, can, without holy fear or hesitation, sing doxologies, and derive pleasure from the emotions excited, not by any spiritual appreciation of the majesty of God, but merely by the natural effect of sweet melody and the harmonious combination of musical sounds skilfully rendered by themselves and their associates ; yet there are times when true be-

lievers cannot join in the exercise, owing to the felt deadness of their heart and the darkness of their minds. If they do join in it, while in that state of mind, they feel themselves guilty of profaning God's holy name. There are times, however, when their whole soul is awakened to devout and joyful admiration of the love, mercy, holiness, and greatness of God, but even then they are not without feelings of holy reverence, which produce godly fear.

2. That we may earnestly, intelligently, and heartily praise God, let us realize our utter inability to apply to ourselves the redemption purchased by Christ. As we did not quicken and enlighten ourselves, neither can we sanctify ourselves; for these are such mighty operations as can be produced only by the exceeding greatness of his power. If in our thoughts we attribute our conversion, faith, and growth in grace to ourselves, we rob God of the glory due to him, and provoke him to leave us to our own feeble efforts until we shall be sorely convinced of our sin.

3. We are bound to make the glory of God our chief end. But this no one can do until he is renewed, and until Christ dwell in him by his Spirit. It is utterly beyond the power of natural men, as it is contrary to their disposition, to rise above themselves and love God supremely. Though this is altogether above nature, we shall be lost forever unless we attain it, and God shall be glorified in our everlasting punishment.

You see then, sinners, that, unless you are born again, "you cannot enter the kingdom of God." Be not deceived with vain thoughts, for there is no power in heaven or earth that can work the change in you but that of God himself. Cast yourselves then on his mercy as lost sinners unable to save yourselves, and not deserving that God would save you.

DISCOURSE XXX.

THE CHRISTIAN WALK.

Eph. iv. 1-3: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

THE exhortation in these verses is of a general character, but in the following verses the apostle refers to various duties in detail. Here his meaning is, that seeing God bestowed such exalted privileges upon the Ephesians, he, the prisoner of the Lord, earnestly exhorted them to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called."

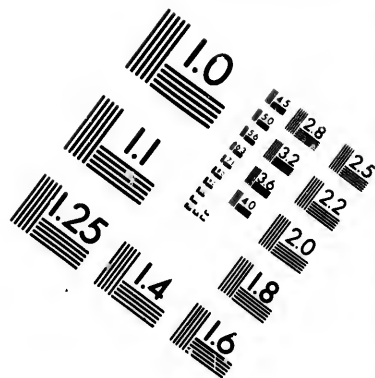
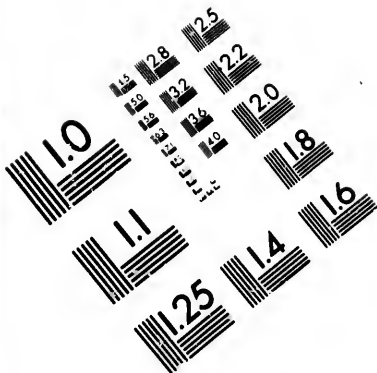
- I. Notice the standard of the Christian walk. "I beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."

Believers should walk worthy of the blessings which God has conferred upon them, seeing it is he who has effectually called them to these by his grace.

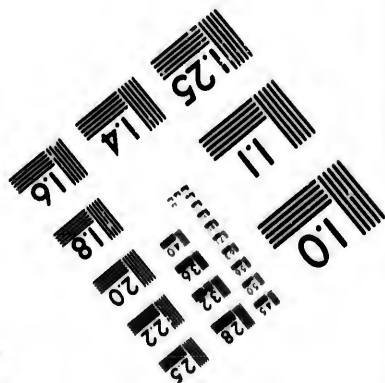
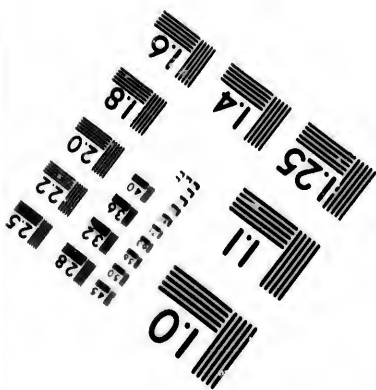
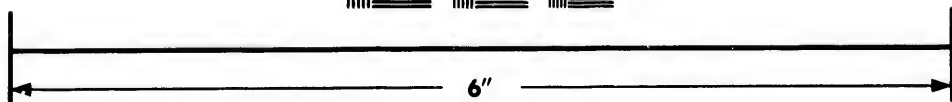
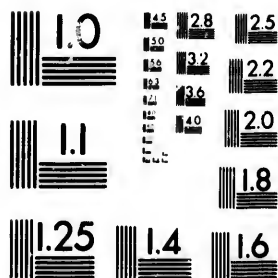
1. This vocation is a Divine call to sinners, and which is admirably described in the Shorter Catechism as "the work of God's Spirit, whereby convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the gospel."

This work is accomplished by such an exercise of power upon the soul as results in turning a sinner to God, and inducing him to enter his kingdom. Some think that it is no more than moral suasion, brought to bear upon men through the word of God, that accomplishes this change ; but the apostle, in the first chapter of this epistle, clearly shows that it is done by the immediate agency of God. He says that it was by "the exceeding greatness of his power," whereby he "raised Christ from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places," that the Ephesians were "quickened together with Christ, . . . raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." The same power, that was exercised in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, is necessarily exercised in the effectual calling or conversion of sinners. As moral suasion could not accomplish the one, neither can it accomplish the other. If the idea of the resur-





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rection of Christ by moral suasion is absurd, it is impossible that sinners are regenerated by it.

2. We observe, however, that the Lord uses means for effecting this great change in men.

In the case of adults the word of God is invariably used, because the preaching of the gospel is the great instrument that is applied in close connection with the Divine act of the new creation. Of this we have an illustration in the raising of Lazarus from the dead; in that case the words that Christ spake were not necessary to produce the result, for he could quicken him by an act of his power without speaking; but "he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth." John xi. 43, 44. It was not the voice that awakened him, but the immediate agency of Christ's irresistible energy. If he had been pleased to order Peter, James, or John to utter the words instead of himself, he could produce the same result. On the day of his ascension to heaven he commanded his disciples to go forth to preach the gospel, and promised to be with them always to make it effectual. Without his presence and power our preaching accomplishes no saving change on any one. Notwithstanding our inefficiency, as we are appointed by Christ to preach the gospel, it is our part to obey in dependence on his gracious operations in connection with his own ordinances. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power

may be of God, and not of us." 2 Cor. iv. 7. As God produces the greatest effects of his power by means that are in themselves altogether inadequate, his glory appears more conspicuously to those who are able to discern it; for this reason he honours the proclamation of the gospel above all other instrumentalities. Men, who despise it, may presumptuously attempt to accomplish by human means what can only be done by it; but in this way they have always failed, and will fail to the end. No doubt God uses various means to awaken men's attention to his declaration in the word; by sickness he forces upon them a conviction of the uncertainty of their mortal lives, and thus disposes them to consider his proposals of mercy. For the same end he blesses good books and the godly conversation of devout men, but in all these his word is brought to bear upon the mind, and the Spirit of Christ, by causing serious reflection, prepares them to embrace God's offers of mercy.

3. The blessings to which they are called.

God, before the foundation of the world, predestinated his people, whom he had chosen, to "the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself." Eph. i. 5. This includes redemption, forgiveness of sins, holiness, citizenship in the commonwealth of Israel, and exaltation to glory. They are called to be conformed to the image of Christ and to be members of the family of God, of whom everyone has access to the Father

through Jesus Christ. Their privileges are highly valuable, and the honour of God is pledged to promote their welfare, and they have liberty to come at all times into God's presence to state their circumstances, wants, and desires. Christ, as their elder brother, because it was his right to do so, redeemed them; he opened for them a new and a living way into the holiest, and he consecrated it by his blood; he is waiting to present them to the Father, and he procures all needed blessings for them by his intercession. They are therefore encouraged to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Heb. iv. 16. If they intelligently appreciate their advantages, they will joyfully avail themselves of them, and will daily consult God concerning their affairs. Because he has pleasure in their society, they grieve him by failing to maintain communion with him. His enemies provoke him to anger by their sins, but his people grieve his Spirit by their unkind distrust of him. Seeing then their privileges are so valuable, it becomes them to walk worthy of them.

- II. This leads us to notice the manner of the Christian walk. "I, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing

one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Here the apostle recommends the cultivation of several virtues.

1. Humility. "Walk . . . with all lowliness."

The word means a low opinion of ourselves; and this estimate of our own character is reasonable, seeing that, by nature, we are guilty sinners, depraved, and corrupt. The apostle's view of himself was such that he said: "I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." Rom. vii. 18. As there is nothing that produces deeper self-abasement in ingenuous souls more than unmerited favours, the apostle skilfully set forth in the first part of the epistle the great blessings which God bestowed on his people. He exhorted them to realize the truth that they were altogether unworthy of such high favours. Humility is necessary to Christians, for it lies at the foundation of all grace; indeed without it they cannot walk worthy of their high calling. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." James iv. 6. "The LORD shall cut off . . . the tongue that speaketh proud things." Ps. xii. 3. "The LORD plentifully rewardeth the proud doer." Ps. xxxi. 23. "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished." Prov. xvi. 5. Such are sure to stumble, if they do not really forsake the way of holiness. When believers cherish

pride, their walk becomes unsteady, and they dishonour their high calling ; they are therefore admonished not to "be high-minded, but to fear." Rom. xi. 20. It is necessary that we should look to our way, "and make straight paths for our feet." Heb. xii. 13. Let us also beware of congratulating ourselves upon a humility that is spurious, as in the case of some who suppose themselves so sinful as to make it improper for them to rest by faith on Christ, or to perform certain commanded duties, but wait until they improve themselves. This humility is not genuine, it is pride in a false garb, such a high opinion of themselves as prevents them from trusting in God and submitting to his will. No one who is the slave of this evil principle can walk worthy of the gospel. It therefore becomes us to consider whether we will rely on our own merits, and trust in our own powers, or, convinced of our worthlessness, we will renounce them and cast ourselves by faith in Christ on the generous mercy of God. In the method of grace, boasting is excluded ; for we are saved, "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost ; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." Titus iii. 5, 6.

2. Gentleness. "I beseech you to walk with meekness."

Meekness is that mild and uncomplaining disposi-

tion of mind that enables us to bear the faults of others, and injuries done to us, without irritation or vindictive feelings. The world regards this state of mind as unbecoming a brave man. A person is considered mean-spirited who can meekly put up with evil treatment without resenting it by taking vengeance upon the doer of it. It is true that we are permitted to protect our reputation and property, but this should be done in the spirit of mildness and free from malice. Gentleness, united to power, is one of the most attractive features of human character, for thereby we greatly resemble Christ, who, though possessing the greatest fortitude, was "meek and lowly in heart." Mat. xi. 29. Though he was "the mighty God," yet he was "the Prince of peace." While he was on earth, where he performed wonderful works of great power, he did "not strive, nor cry: neither did any man hear his voice on the streets." When at last "he was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb dumb before his shearers, he opened not his mouth." Acts viii. 32. It is the duty of a Christian to suppress all feelings of revenge, and to refrain from injuring his worst enemy. God, who claims vengeance as his own prerogative, gives us no liberty to exercise it for ourselves. Christ prayed his Father to forgive his murderers, and, in his gentleness, referred to their ignorance in mitigation of their crime. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Luke xxiii. 34. If we have a meek and forgiving

spirit it indicates that our character is so far made like that of Christ ; but if we cherish malicious revenge it shows that we are still like the Jews to whom it was said : " Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do ; he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him." John viii. 44. Christ said to his disciples : " If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you ; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Mat. vi. 14, 15.

3. The third virtue which becomes the vocation of believers is " long-suffering." " I beseech you to walk . . . with long-suffering."

We should learn to suppress all wrathful irritation at the faults, foibles, and infirmities of those with whom we are associated, and to forbear them in love. This grace needs to be constantly exercised, for otherwise the friction produced by intercourse with others will be painfully injurious to all parties concerned. It is easier for strong minds to forgive great wrongs, than to overlook the provocations of slight improprieties, small mistakes, little oversights ; differences in taste, manners and forms of expression. We are often thrown into the company of people who, because their minds are ignorant, speak only of mere trifles ; or we may have to associate with others who in their conceited consequence greatly weary us with recitals of their own

exploits, which, though insignificant, they greatly magnify ; but we should bear with them with patience. If connected with selfish, haughty, or ill-tempered people, we should seek grace to behave with kindness toward them ; and if we are in the company of censorious people, we need to cultivate sweetness of temper, that we may be prepared to defend with prudence the good name of those whom they harshly or unjustly condemn. When in the society of many who indulge in the wicked practice of speaking of the faults of other people, we should guard against taking a part in their back-biting. Indeed this evil custom has acquired such power over many that they can no more cease from it than the habitual drunkard can give up his tipping. The one vice is as hard to cure as the other, and which of them does the most mischief to society is left to the reader to determine. When, however, we are in the society of either we need prudent forbearance ; for though it may be proper to reprove those who speak evil of their neighbours, the incoherencies of the drunkard should be borne with as much patience as possible. We may not be able to do great things that may be extensively beneficial to mankind, but we may by meekness, gentleness, and forbearance, add to the comfort of the limited society among whom we are situated. Though one is not a mighty Niagara pouring its floods over the rocks with such grandeur as excites the admiration of the civilized world, yet he may be a

living stream, which, though small, may refresh the fields through which it runs. If we cultivate humility, gentleness, and peaceable dispositions in dependence on grace, our lives will not be useless, for thereby we shall oil the wheels of social intercourse so that they shall revolve smoothly without friction ; and, as members of the Church of Christ, we shall promote concord and brotherly love. "Blessed are the meek ; for they shall inherit the earth." "Blessed are the merciful ; for they shall obtain mercy . . . Blessed are the peace-makers ; for they shall be called the children of of God." Mat. v. 5, 7, 9.

4. An important object secured by the due cultivation of these virtues is the maintaining of "the unity of the Spirit."

As the Spirit is the author of brotherly love and peace, Christians are here urged to endeavour to cherish these in order to keep the unity which he has placed in the family of God. Seeing that he is the principle of unity in the body of Christ, every thing that disturbs concord, or tends to weaken the bond of charity, grieves him because it is contrary to his nature. We should therefore be zealous in the preservation of Christian harmony ; and to be successful, we must cultivate humility, gentleness, charity, and peace ; for if we indulge in pride, harshness, self-will, and violence, we shall trouble the church, by the production within it of disquietude and alienation of hearts.

Love and peace are essential to the holy fellowship of the members of the mystical body. Brotherly unity is the fruit of the Spirit, the evidence of his presence. When contentions, jealousies, and hatred prevail, great evils will be the result, because they cause the Spirit to withdraw.

Practical Reflections:

1. Our walk should be an evidence of our calling ; our humility should manifest itself in our meekness and charity. If we are deeply convinced by the law, but more by the cross of Christ, of our own unworthiness, we endeavour to bear, in the spirit of meekness, with injuries done to us by others, and when wronged we shall recognize the hand of our Father in heaven in the chastisement, because we understand that it is to promote our welfare. We should honestly endeavour to modify our pride, vindictiveness, and unkind feelings. If we cannot heartily forgive injuries, and wish our enemies well, we are not in a fit state to receive a comfortable assurance of forgiveness, if indeed we can receive it at all.

2. We should cultivate Christian affection, and endeavour to promote unity in the Church. It requires much grace to preserve peace and concord, but it requires neither grace nor gifts to cause strife, dissension, and divisions. If it is the peace-makers who are blessed, what shall be said of them who, to gratify some feeling or fancy, in their self-will, introduce

causes of dispute, contention, and alienation among brethren ?

3. It is only those who are effectually called to faith, repentance, and holiness, who can walk worthy of this high vocation, all others walk only "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." The life and peace which God offers in the gospel will be given to all who accept them on his terms. They are offered gratuitously, without respect to condition or character. "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

DISCOURSE XXXI.

DIVERSITY IN UNITY.

Eph. iv. 4-7: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ."

THAT they might walk worthy of the privileges to which they were called, the apostle urged the Ephesians to preserve the unity which the Spirit established among them. For this purpose he stated the

nature and grounds of it as arising from the fact that there is but "one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God the Father of all." Though the members of the church possess different measures of grace, yet it is but one body having one governing Head, who communicates to every part of it the vitality and power that it needs to perform its functions.

I. Notice the grounds of the unity of the church.

1. It is one body.

All believers are in Christ as members of his mystical body, which is not many conflicting bodies, but one. "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." Rom. xii. 5, 6. "For we, being many, are one head and one body." 1 Cor. x. 17. "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular," or, "severally members." 1 Cor. xii. 27. Believers, as members of Christ's body, are "the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Eph. 1. 23. As the spiritual church on earth is not one external organization, but consists of persons in various religious communities differing from each other in constitutions, systems of doctrines, and discipline, it is clear that the body of which the apostle speaks is not a visible society but a spiritual organization which is animated by Christ

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as its Head. All believers stand in a relationship to each other similar to that which subsists between the several members of the human body. Among them there is a living sympathy with one another, so that when "one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." 1 Cor. xii. 26. If we have not that fellow-feeling for the disciples of Christ, it is evident that we are not members of his body.

2. There is one Spirit.

Some may understand by this: "One heart and one mind," and it is true that God's people are so characterized, but Spirit here means the Holy Ghost, as is plain from the fact that every body is animated by its own spirit. The body of Christ is animated by the Spirit of the Head, who dwells in all the members, as our souls pervade every part of our bodies. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink of the same Spirit." 1 Cor. xii. 13. The apostle says of believers: "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that hath raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." Rom. viii. 9-11. "Know ye not

that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." 1 Cor. iii. 16. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you." 1 Cor. vi. 19. There is nothing more clearly taught in Scripture than the personal indwelling of the Holy Ghost in believers, not by a mere communication of influence by the word or otherwise, but by his actual presence, as our souls are present in all the members of our bodies. He is the life of the mystical body of Christ. As one life pervades a living organism, so does the Holy Ghost pervade every part of that spiritual organism, the body of Christ mystical. From this we may see that every thing that tends to destroy the unity of believers is a sin against the Holy Ghost (not, however, the unpardonable sin). Our relation to Christ, to his Spirit, and to the brethren, demands that we love the saints, and that we abstain from dissevering what the Spirit has bound together.

3. There is one hope. "Even as ye are called in one hope of your calling"

Seeing that believers are one body, animated by one Spirit, they have one hope which produces unity of sentiment. They have the same hope, because they have the same destiny and expectation. The Holy Ghost produces the same aspirations in them, the same anticipations of the same heavenly inheritance, and gives them here some participation therein. They have the same object of hope, called "the hope set before

us," so that faith therein produces in them the grace of hope, or expectation of enjoying it for ever. Their effectual calling by the Spirit gives rise to this hope, inasmuch as it is an invitation to receive the inheritance of the saints, and is itself an earnest of it. Where this hope is caused to arise in the heart there is a desire for the possession of the blessings looked for. Notwithstanding diversities of knowledge and feelings, believers have the same object and grace of hope.

4. There is "one Lord."

A lord, strictly speaking, is a sovereign proprietor, and the Lord Jesus Christ is this in virtue of his Divine personality and nature. The Lordship ascribed to him here, however, is bestowed upon him by the Father in reward of his work; for he "both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the living and the dead." Rom. xiv. 9. He is, therefore, the rightful owner and absolute sovereign of the church; and this supreme dominion extends to the souls, bodies, and properties of his people. Because they are wholly his, they owe all honour and service to him. On that account the apostle says: "Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." 1 Cor. vi. 20. This relationship to Christ binds his people together; because the subjects of one sovereign are united as one nation; for notwithstanding diverse personal interests, if loyal, they are all desirous of upholding the authority of their king, and

of promoting the prosperity of the kingdom. The union of believers to Christ is much more intimate, for they are his by purchase, are vitally united to him, he has, in justice, absolute sovereignty over them, and they have affectionate regard for him. They "love him, because he first loved" them. 1 John iv. 19.

5. There is "one faith."

Faith more frequently means the grace of faith, or the spiritual power whereby the people of God believe his word, with confidence in his love and faithfulness. "According to your faith be it unto you." Mat. ix. 29. "The apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith." Luke xvii. 5. "When your faith is increased." 2 Cor. x. 15. Faith, however, in this passage means the object of faith, the truths or creed believed. In this sense the word is used in various places in the Scriptures. "They had heard . . . that he which persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith which he once destroyed." Gal. i. 23. "A great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." Acts vi. 7. The apostle Jude exhorts believers to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints." Jude 3. As far as men profess the same doctrine speculatively they may be said to have one faith, however much they differ in real convictions. All the members of the Church of England profess to believe the Thirty-nine Articles, Presbyterians the Westminster Confession of Faith, and Methodists the

system of doctrine and church discipline preached by John Wesley. Although considerable diversities of views exist among the adherents of these various communities, they may be said to have respectively one faith. True believers have one faith, not merely because they have the same creed, but they sincerely believe and embrace the same fundamental truths of the gospel. Their unity is not perfect in this life, inasmuch as they differ in opinion on many subordinate points, but they agree on all those that are necessary to salvation and godliness. To that extent their faith is one. They receive the Scriptures as the word of God, they believe Jesus Christ to be the eternal Son of God, they worship and serve him accordingly, they trust in his blood for redemption, and they rely on the Holy Ghost for sanctification. Though the unity of the church is not yet without defects, it is destined to become perfect; for "we shall come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Eph. iv. 13.

6. There is one baptism.

As under the Old Testament all the circumcised were consecrated to the service of the same God, and entered into the same covenant, so under the new dispensation all the baptised make the same profession of the Christian faith, accept the same covenant, and are consecrated to the same Lord and Redeemer.

They may differ as to the age at which the ordinance should be administered, and with regard to the mode of receiving the rite, as people do with regard to various subordinate doctrines of the faith; but the baptism they receive is one in significance and obligation. It is as unreasonable to base an argument on this passage for one mode of administering baptism, and for denying the validity of the rite when otherwise performed, as it would be to deny that every one who does not accept every article in a particular system of doctrines has the one faith.

7. There is one God. "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

As the church is one, because it is the mystical body of Christ, animated by his Spirit, owned and ruled by our Lord, so is it one because it sustains the relation of child to God the Father, who is over itself and its Mediatorial Head; and pervades, fills, and sustains it by his life-giving presence. The church is one because there is to it one God, the Father, one Lord, Christ, and one Spirit, the Holy Ghost. Its unity is founded on the Trinity. This union is not a mere union of opinion and feeling, but supernaturally arising from a common principle of life. The Scriptures declare that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost dwell in believers. "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him; and make our abode with him."

John xiv. 23. "The Spirit of truth dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." John xiv. 17.

II. Notice the diversities of gifts bestowed by Christ on his people.

1. The church is a living organism consisting of many members, all of which are necessary to its unity and perfection. Eyes, ears, and other members which receive communications from without for the benefit of the whole body are analagous to the members of the church, as endowed with various gifts. These diversities are essential to the unity of the mystical body of Christ. The apostle says:—"The body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it, therefore, not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it, therefore, not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? if the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?" 1 Cor. xii. 14-17. That is, no one member, whether eye, ear, hand, or foot, makes a body; for all are necessary for the discharge of their respective functions therein. As the church needs organs for receiving and communicating knowledge to its members, God endows some with capacity for the performance of this very necessary office. The church needs men of sound understanding who find pleasure in the study of the Scriptures for the

investigation of truth, and who have ability to impart instruction to others; but if all were such teachers, where would the church be? It needs organs to receive and digest the truth, persons who are fitted for incorporating it in secret, that its influence may be imparted to all the members. The greater the number of quiet, godly people whose spirituality is constantly felt by those around them, the greater is the health of the church. Devout women, who truly love the Lord, do valuable service in commending spiritual religion to their families and friends, not by giving public instruction, but by holy example and prudent counsels. The church also needs active, practical persons who, as hands and feet, are able to carry into effect the directions imparted by its teachers in their instructions. When this is not done, infirm health will be the result, for the more bountiful the nourishment given, the greater the danger of the formation of proud humours which will certainly break out. If sound food does not produce godly activity in good works, unhealthy surfeit, followed by a deranged condition of the body, will be the result, or perhaps, it will be afflicted with itching ears, which shall give rise to a desire to heap to itself teachers after its lusts. We see then that a due proportion of various members fitted to perform their respective functions is necessary to the unity and prosperity of the church.

2. These members, however active, are not self-made.

As eyes, ears, hands and feet, do not make themselves what they are, and cannot exchange positions and functions with each other, so the members of the body of Christ do not make themselves and their gifts, nor can they exchange graces and powers; because the Holy Ghost, who is the author of these, bestows them on whom he pleases. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are diversities of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God that worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to all to profit withal. For to one is given the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gift of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." 1 Cor. xii. 4-11. Christ, who is the source of the inward life of the church, distributes gifts in it as, in his sovereignty, it seems good to him, that by them he may promote its unity and welfare. For that reason to "every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." The rule is neither our merits, nor capacities, nor prayers, but his own good pleasure.

From those truths we conclude :

1. That it is our duty to be content with the position assigned us, and not to envy those who are more conspicuously situated, nor despise those who are most obscure because their gifts are inferior to those of many others. To refuse to act in our place because we have not talents that attract attention, is to be useless and consequently a hindrance to the church. If the foot refuse to be the foot, and to act as such, that does not make it the hand or any other member, but it becomes so worthless that it may be necessary to cut it away and leave it to perish. Thus we see that ambitious and discontented members of the church are exposed to fearful perils.

2. It is our duty to endeavour to preserve the unity of the body of Christ. It is easy to disturb it, nor does it take very great ability to cause trouble in it. Indeed no one needs to boast if he is detrimental to its healthy progress and peace. We need the grace of brotherly love that we may have a hearty sympathy with the whole community and every part of it, as far as we know it. We may judge whether we belong to the body of Christ by ascertaining whether we are content with our position therein, and whether we have sympathy with our brethren. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." 1 John iii. 14.

3. The body of Christ is not yet complete, but

there is both a process of development within itself, and it constantly receives additions from without. God is daily bringing some into it who had no previous connection with it, and though it is by the Holy Ghost they are changed, he also uses his word as means to draw them. By it he invites sinners to come to Christ, and assures them, that if they do so, they shall become members of his body, to occupy that position, and be endowed with such gifts as shall best promote their own welfare and that of the whole community.

DISCOURSE XXXII.

THE GOSPEL MINISTRY THE GIFT OF CHRIST.

Eph. iv. 8-13: "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists: and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

IN this passage we see that the ministry of the gospel is the gift of Christ. Concerning it we may ask, as Christ asked the Pharisees concerning the

baptism of John, Whether it is of heaven or of men ; and to the question our text replies : "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men : apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Seeing then that the ministry is the gift of Christ, we should neither expect nor accept it from popes, or princes, or prelates, or synods, or conferences ; for if Christ is the dispenser of the gift, the church should look to him for the bestowal of it. Some say : we know that Christ gave the apostles, but we do not see that ordinary ministers are given by him. But that we may see that Christ still continues to bestow officers on the church we will consider the gifts conferred, how they were procured, how given to the church, the end for which they are given, and our duty with regard to them.

- I. Notice the gifts conferred by Christ upon the church. "He gave some, apostles ; some, prophets ; some, evangelists ; some, pastors and teachers."

Though these various officers required to be endowed with different measures of grace and divers qualifications, yet they are necessary to the unity of the mystical body of Christ.

1. He first of all gave apostles.

These were immediately appointed by Christ as his messengers and witnesses to testify of his doctrines

miracles, resurrection, and ascension to heaven. In virtue of Divine inspiration and delegated authority, they were infallible teachers and absolute rulers in the church. No man can be an apostle unless he is immediately appointed by Christ, saw him bodily after his resurrection, and is an infallible teacher by the gift of inspiration. As these qualifications are essential to the apostolic office, whoever claims it, unless he has them, is a false apostle. It is evident that the office was temporary, and ceased when it served its purpose of organizing the church in its New Testament form, by authoritatively settling its constitution, worship, discipline, and doctrines. Since the days of the apostles, as no one could show that he had the essential qualifications, all that assumed the title were usurpers; for, when the gifts were no more given, the office necessarily ceased.

2. He gave prophets.

This does not include Old Testament prophets, but those whom Christ gave when he ascended on high. They were contemporary with the apostles, and were occasionally inspired by the Spirit to speak for God to men. As their gift was not permanent like that of the apostles, their position as teachers was subordinate. As the gift of infallibility was essential to the apostolic office, so was occasional inspiration essential to the prophetic office, so that when the spiritual endowment was withheld the office came to

an end. It is daring presumption for any man to claim infallibility, and demand submission to his authority on pain of perdition, unless he is qualified by inspiration to speak nothing but unerring truth by the command of God.

3. He gave evangelists.

Of this office there are two views: (1) Some regard them as vicars of the apostles, sent by them to certain places with authority to organize churches by the ordination of office-bearers, to whom as well as to the people they were to give instructions in their respective duties. If this view is correct the office must have been temporary, for no person can now claim to have had an appointment to such work immediately from an apostle. (2) Others think that the office is permanent, and that, therefore, the work of the evangelist consists in preaching the gospel, not as a pastor to one congregation, but throughout the land, wherever he finds people to hear. Although Paul exhorted Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist," it may be said that this was in addition to his special duties. It seems from the few references in the Scriptures to the office that the evangelists' work was preaching; but this does not countenance every self-appointed and unauthorized preacher who may traverse the country. It may be supposed that evangelists were duly recognized and ordained to proclaim the gospel as well as pastors, and that both might change

from the one department to the other, where God in his providence would direct them to go. If, however, the office of the evangelists was distinct from that of pastors and teachers, it does not appear that it exists now. If, therefore, the office ceased, it seems that it was not intended to be permanent in the church.

4. He gave pastors and teachers.

This seems to imply two departments of the same office, and that the duties of each were discharged by the same class. The pastor and teacher was simply the minister or bishop of a congregation, who ruled and taught the people, and we learn that he was assisted in their oversight by men called "governments," or ruling "elders." It is a standing office, which shall continue until the second coming of Christ.

11. Notice how these gifts were procured for the church. "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth.)" He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.

1. Seeing these gifts and the right to bestow them cost Christ so much, we may see their great worth; the Psalmist foretold that at his triumph, which implies his previous conflict during his humilia-

tion, he "received gifts for men"; and here the apostle informs us that he now dispenses them. The overthrow of Pharaoh, when Israel was delivered from his oppression, to which the Psalm refers, foreshadowed the more signal overthrow of death and the devil by Christ when he engaged with them in mortal combat. By depriving them of their power, he liberated his people, who were held captive by them, and in reward of his work, he was "by the right hand of God exalted," and "received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost." Acts ii. 33. Since his ascension Christ has bestowed spiritual gifts upon men. The illustrious victory celebrated by the Psalmist, and here described by the apostle, was preparatory to the receiving the right of bestowing the gospel ministry upon the church. From this, see the greatness of Christ's generosity, and the value of his gifts. If we had discernment, we should see more glory in the settlement of a minister over a congregation than in all the gorgeous ceremonies which are connected with the coronation of monarchs, the investiture of noblemen with the insignia of their ranks, and the consecration of popes and prelates. Dazzling as are the displays made on such occasions, they are but mere glitter in comparison with the glory displayed by Christ when he gives to his people a minister whom he has endowed with the qualifications necessary to the successful discharge of the functions of his high office. Natural men cannot

see the grandeur of this transaction ; for Christ is to them " without form or comeliness " ; nor do they see " beauty either in himself or his servants that they should desire " them, but believers in some measure behold " his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father," which glory, though faintly, is reflected by his ministers. If there was such magnificence in connection with the consecration of Aaron to the priesthood, as on the occasion sacrifices of peculiar solemnity were offered, and he was arrayed in gorgeous robes which were magnificently ornamented, and the cloud of God's presence filled the tabernacle, much more is there in connection with the installation of a minister of the gospel. " For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious." 2 Cor. iii. 10, 11. Natural men do not admire the great beauty of Christ's gifts, because carnal reason can but appreciate worldly things, but cannot see spiritual things. We admire the stars at night, but when the sun rises their light is obscured ; and so men, while in the darkness of their natural state, admire the artificial glory of human pomp and of men-invented religious ceremonies ; but when the Sun of Righteousness rises in their hearts, the lustre of worldly ceremonies shall become dim.

2. The officers of the church are the fruit of the

humiliation and death of Christ. "He descended into the lower parts of the earth."

His incarnation was such a descent; for therein the Son of God, who is in the bosom of the Father, made his abode in the womb of the Virgin, a habitation which the Psalmist so describes when he says concerning himself: "I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth." Ps. cxxxix. 15. While the Son of God lived in this world, his social position was among the poor, the lower rank in human society. The high-born nobility of his nation, with the common people, despised, rejected, and condemned him to death. His death and burial was a lower descent still, for the Prince of life gave up the ghost. Having come under the weight of the wrath of God, his body was for a season deposited in the earth. All this humiliation was necessary to procure gifts to be distributed to men "for the edifying of his mystical body." If he had not suffered and died there would be no Christian ministry. This institution arose with Christ from his grave. Though some argue that there should be no stated ministry in the church, the ordinance was purchased by the blood of Christ, and he will sustain it until he comes again. While its services are needed it will exist in efficiency in spite of all opposition and ignorant contempt of ungodly men. The Mediatorial glory which Christ obtained in reward of his humiliation must be proclaimed in the world by

his servants, and displayed in the holy ordinances of his appointment.

III. Notice how these gifts are conferred on the church.

1. Christ enacted standing laws on the subject.

The ministerial office is not a human invention, but an ordinance of Divine appointment. If, therefore, the Lord had not set up an institution for that purpose all the Christians in the world would have no right to create offices or appoint men to them; and if the statutes that he made to regulate the matter ended by lapse of time, or were repealed, the ministry of the gospel would immediately cease. The office and its laws shall not end while the world lasts, any more than the ordinance of the sun, moon, and stars shall be abolished. Christ's order is: "Go ye, and teach all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Mat. xxviii. 19, 20. In reward of his work he was exalted and received gifts with authority to dispense them, and, therefore, he bestows "pastors and teachers" on the church "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of

Christ." Until that end shall be attained the institution of the ministry must continue.

2. Seeing that Christ endows ministers with the necessary qualifications, natural and spiritual, no one is properly fitted for the office without both ; for though a man be learned and eloquent, yet, if he has not grace, he is not given by Christ. " Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge ; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2. On the other hand, should one have saving faith, charity, knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel, and genuine Christian experience, but if he lack the gift of utterance, he is not appointed by Christ to the ministry, nor given by him to the church as such. In his directions to Timothy concerning the matter, the apostle says : " A bishop must be . . . apt to teach." 1 Tim. iii. 2. Were the Lord Jesus Christ to resolve to take the ministry from the church, he would merely require to withhold the necessary gifts, and the institution would come to an end, for all useful spiritual purposes. When he has in several instances done this to some extent, because churches failed to appreciate his favour, they soon became corrupt in doctrine and worship. Indeed, where people do not grow in faith and holiness, they provoke God to punish them by giving them over to delusions " that

they may believe a lie," and "heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts."

3. Christ has given to the church the right to call to the office of pastor and teacher such persons as he has endowed with the requisite gifts, but no other. The church or congregation, by the act of calling a minister, declares that he is a man given by Christ as fitted for the office, that they receive him as a gift from him, and that they give themselves to his servant. The people profess to submit themselves, in the Lord, to the minister whom they have called according to his direction. The Macedonians first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to the apostles "by the will of God." 2 Cor. viii. 5. Those who have a gospel right to call a minister must be persons who have surrendered themselves to God, and are prepared to give themselves to the minister to be instructed in the Word of God and Christian duties in accordance therewith. They solemnly bind themselves to receive his teaching, not merely as far as it suits their taste, but as far as it is the counsel of God.

We learn the mind of Christ concerning the call and settlement of ministers from the records of apostolic practice contained in the New Testament. The first account of the matter is that concerning the election of an apostle to succeed Judas Iscariot. After Peter explained the necessary qualifications of an apostle, the disciples were commanded to nominate a leet; "and they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas

and Matthias." Acts i. 23. Then, humbly and devoutly, requesting the Lord to indicate his choice of the two, "they gave forth their lot; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles." Acts i. 26. The next instance is the election and ordination of deacons. The apostles invited the whole church at Jerusalem to choose seven good men from among themselves, whom, when this was done, they ordained by prayer and imposition of hands. Acts vi. When Paul and Barnabus left Derbe and "returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, . . . they ordained them elders in every church, . . . and commended them to the grace of the Lord." Acts xiv. 21-23. The word "ordained," in the passage, should be rendered "ordained by election." Seeing that they appointed several elders in each congregation we learn that, in order to conform to the will of Christ, there should be a plurality of elders chosen by its members in every congregation. With regard to the election and call of ministers, no modern church, except the Congregational and Presbyterian, conform to the apostolic practice. The departure from this rule is a disregard of the will of Christ, who alone has the right to enact laws for the regulation of the government of his own house.

4. Ministers are set apart to the sacred office by ordination.

From Acts and 1 Tim. iv. 14, we learn that officers of the church were ordained by prayer and

the imposition of the hands of the Presbytery. We have no record in Scripture of an ordination by one presbyter or bishop, but by several. The Presbyterian Church only strictly adheres to New Testament practice in this rite.

IV. Notice the end for which the ministry is conferred on the church. "He gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

1. For the purpose of "perfecting the saints," Christ appointed the ministry of the gospel to edify his body.

Without noticing the different words of this verse, we observe that the meaning of the whole is that Christ appointed the ministry to build up or nourish his mystical body that it may become perfect in unity, form, and power. The apostle could not more highly exalt the ministry than by attributing this effect to it. In themselves the preachers of the gospel are only earthen vessels, but by the power of Christ they shall accomplish that high end that the glory may be of God. There can be no greater work than this; for by it God shall be glorified more conspicuously than

by anything else in the universe. Men may regard the ministry as useless, and neglect the ordinances of Christ, but seeing they are Divine institutions, perfection cannot be attained without them.

2. The ministry is not a temporary but a permanent institution in the church. It is true that apostles, prophets, and perhaps evangelists, have ceased, because they accomplished their purpose, but pastors and teachers will continue until "we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." There is a unity of faith and knowledge now, but not yet perfect; for though believers hold the doctrines that are essential to salvation, they differ on many subordinate points; and though they savingly know the Son of God, they have yet much to learn concerning him; their experience of his loving-kindness and goodness is not what it will be. "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now we know in part; but then shall we know even as also we are known." 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Neither the church nor any member of it is perfect in this life, but it shall reach its full maturity when Christ comes again, nor shall the ministry be abolished until that end be reached.

V. Notice our duty with regard to the gift of the ministry.

1. The church should look to Christ for its supply. "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he may send forth labourers into his harvest." Mat. ix. 17, 18. If we look to men for ministers, or depend on our own judgment in the selection of them, we despise Christ, and ignore him as the dispenser of these gifts. Many do not at all apply to Christ when choosing ministers, so that it is no wonder that they are not themselves afterwards edified, nor sinners born again.

2. We are bound to appreciate the gifts of Christ; for if it cost him so much to procure themselves and the right to confer them on the church, they must be very precious. It is an easy matter for a proud sinner to depreciate these servants of Christ, but they are the purchase of his blood for us. It is easy to exaggerate their infirmities into crimes, and to represent even their virtues as vices, for Christ himself was treated in the same way.

3. We should improve this gift of Christ by attending regularly on the ordinances of the gospel, with earnest prayer for his blessing upon them that by his power accompanying the word we may be spiritually edified. Seeing that the ministers of the gospel are commissioned by Christ to speak in his name, we should receive instruction from them as far as they speak according to the Scriptures as if it were Christ himself who spoke to us.

DISCOURSE XXXIII.

THE PROGRESS OF BELIEVERS FROM CHILDHOOD TO PERFECTION.

Eph. iv. 14-16: "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

BETWEEN the infancy of believers and their maturity there is a period of growth, to promote which Christ gave the ministry of the gospel to the church "that we be no more children," but make healthy progress toward complete manhood in him who is the Head. Let us, therefore, consider the childhood, growth, and maturity of believers.

I. Notice the childhood of believers.

1. Observe that childhood is natural and necessary.

Except our first parents all men commenced their life in infancy, and the same is true of the people of God with regard to their spiritual life. To instruct

his disciples, "Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Mat. xviii. 2, 3. In all true converts there are formed spiritual features of character that correspond with the natural dispositions of children, such as humility, docility, and confiding faith. "Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Mat. xviii. 4. Seeing Christ referred to a little child as an example to his followers, how does the apostle exhort believers to "be no more children"? In answer we observe that he does not deny that childhood is a natural stage in life, but that he simply urges them to advance from that state; for—

2. Childhood is a temporary condition.

If a child remains stationary in body and mind from year to year, it is on account of some constitutional defect. Such a state is altogether unsatisfactory, and will end in deformity, idiocy, or death. When one who is supposed to have been born again fails to advance in spiritual life and growth in grace, it is because there is a radical blemish, and proves that the apparent change was not genuine. Such a person will either die, that is, turn from his profession unto the world, or grow up to religious deformity, so as to become a burden and a detriment to the body of Christ. There

are many such connected with the church, but they are invariably a hindrance to its healthy growth.

3. Childhood has many imperfections.

The characteristics of children that are referred to here are credulity and instability. "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." They are yielding and restless, like waves agitated by the wind, and driven in every direction as it blows; and Christians are not reliable while they continue in this state of childhood. Because Reuben, Jacob's eldest son, was a man of this character, his father, by inspiration, said of him: "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." Gen. xlix. 4. In the use of the same figure the apostle exhorts the Hebrews to stability. "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines; for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace." Heb. xiii. 9. The apostle James compares those who are unsteady, on account of the weakness of their faith, to "a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed." James i. 6. Jude speaks of men who creep into the church as "raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame." Jude 13. These last are not, however, genuine, but spurious children, who will never be trustworthy unless they shall be born again. Some truth may interest such for a time, but they will not be long satisfied with

it. They may manifest some zeal on its behalf at first, but when it ceases to please them, because its novelty has passed away, they desire something new. Such restless people shift from the truth to fanciful human notions until they settle at last in some deadly error from which they cannot be recovered. They receive "not the love of the truth, that they might be saved; and for this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie; that they all may be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness." 2 Thes. ii. 10-12. Though the true children, who are born of the Spirit, will not come to this sad end, yet they cannot be useful or comfortable if they continue long in infancy, nor can they have a satisfactory sense of security. On that account the apostle urges the Hebrews to leave "the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and go on unto perfection . . . for it is impossible for those who were once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance." Heb. vi. 1-6. Because children are not only unstable but credulous, they are an easy prey to the artful designs of deceivers. Babes in grace are in danger of being ensnared "by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." Here false teachers are compared to professional dice-

players, who use arts of deception, such as loaded dice, to defraud the unwary and simple.

From this passage we may see the excellence of truth and the evil of error, the value of sound knowledge, and the danger of ignorance. Without the understanding and belief of the truth growth in grace is impossible ; when, therefore, we meet with professing Christians, who are ignorant of the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, we are justified in regarding them as mere children, if even that itself. If ignorance is dangerous, error is evil, springing from evil, and producing evil, and therefore false teachers are represented in Scripture as wicked, deceitful, and selfish. "I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned ; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly ; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." Rom. xvi. 17. 18. These are called ministers of Satan. "Such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel : for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness ; whose end shall be according to their works." 2 Cor. xi. 13-15.

That we may not be entangled in error by the plausible fallacies of those who deviate from sound

doctrine we should advance from childhood toward perfect manhood.

II. This leads me to notice the growth of believers.

1. Observe that growth is necessary to health and usefulness.

A child that does not grow is sickly and feeble, so that instead of aiding the family, it gives trouble and anxiety. In like manner the member of the church that does not grow in evangelical knowledge and spiritual experience is a cause of solicitude. He is weak, often petulant, and capricious, and constantly needs attentive guardianship to protect him from harm. His condition is all the more perilous that he is not at all sensible of his deficiencies; for he is apt to have a high conceit of his own abilities and attainments. Because such restless spirits are impatient of control they often, in a fit of mortified pride, withdraw from any public position in the church to which they may have been appointed, because their brethren do not always concur in their proposals, because another has more influence, or because the restraints of the office which they hold are irksome to them. Such persons are a hindrance to the growth of the mystical body of Christ, nor does their religion afford them much comfortable peace or firm persuasion of safety.

2. An important element in healthy spiritual growth is love. "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up . . . in all things into the Head."

Instability in the faith is a serious evil ; but there may be a steadfast adherence to sound doctrine without godliness. It is said that some hold "the truth in unrighteousness." There may be orthodoxy without piety, nor can there be a worse character than a malignant zealot for sound doctrine ; he upholds truth, not for the glory of God, but, like the devil, for his own selfish purposes. While the apostle condemns want of steadfastness, and denounces the cunning artifices of false teachers, he enjoins a faithful adherence to the truth in love. It is easy for wicked men to speak the truth in malice for the purpose of injuring others. A bad man may try to destroy the influence of some godly person by circulating his mistakes and indiscretions ; though he says nothing but what is true, he does not speak the truth in love, but in hatred, for a base purpose. The apostle means here that, as expressed elsewhere, we should be filled with the truth, so that in love we profess our adherence to the gospel. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." Col. iii. 16. All our utterances of the gospel should be prompted by love ; our expositions of the Word of God, our counsels and admonitions to men should be in kindness.

3. Healthy growth is symmetrical. "May grow in all things into Christ."

Christ is the standard of perfection, the model to which we are to be conformed. Growing "up into him" means the same as coming "unto a perfect man,"

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“unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” The end we should aim at is conformity to Christ, and if we are united to him, we shall attain that end. If we are healthy, though yet imperfect, our growth is symmetrical. Some professors grow in knowledge, but not in grace; others grow in emotionalism, but not in sound understanding. Such are deformed and becoming more so. If a child's head grows, while the body does not; or if the belly alone grows, the development is so very unsatisfactory that it is concluded that it will never come “unto a perfect man.” The religion of mere speculation is like a large head on a withered dwarf, that of mere feeling is like an overgrown belly attached to a diminutive frame. In such there is neither beauty nor power, nor are they fitted for any useful work.

4. Healthy growth is from Christ. “From whom the whole body . . . maketh increase in love.”

Because the church is Christ's body, of which he is the Head, it is in consequence of union to him that it grows, for he is the source from which life and development is derived. This union, though not physical but spiritual, is real, so that the connection of each member with Christ is such that his life is constantly communicated to him. As this connection is vital and permanent, the life of Christ will overcome all the obstacles that interfere with its circulation through the body; but as there is no channel of com-

munication without this union, any growth that may take place cannot be unto Christ but going further from him toward perfect moral deformity.

5. The growth of the body of Christ is promoted by the union of all its parts with each other. "The whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

"The body . . . maketh increase of the body" is an unusual expression, and renders the passage somewhat obscure until one discovers the construction of the sentence. The whole verse is difficult on account of the hard words contained in it, nor is that owing to any fault in our version, for it seems the Greek language could hardly supply words to express the apostle's great thoughts. The revised version renders it: "From whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love." The meaning of the whole is that, as the several members of the human body are connected together and sustained in performing their respective functions by the vital influence derived from the head, so is the church united as one body, and every member of it supported in the discharge

of its peculiar office by the power of Christ constantly communicated to it. As no member of the human body can live or grow when separated from it, so is union, not only with Christ, but also with his mystical body the church, an indispensable condition of the growth of believers in grace. It is granted that this spiritual incorporation may be less or more openly avowed but it is necessary to every living member of Christ mystical. It is perfectly true that outside of this catholic church there is no salvation, and that it is the duty of every believer to confess his relationship to Christ and to his brethren.

As in the body there are certain organs by which nourishment is distributed, so in the church the arrangement is analogous. Christ appointed ordinances for the communication of spiritual life and power to his people, and gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to administer them. Though he could build up his body without such officers, yet it pleased him to appoint these instruments in carrying on this work. In short, all the members of the church are necessary to each other; the loss of even one would be an injury, nor can any of them live but in union with it.

III. Notice the maturity of believers.

1. It shall not be in this life but in glory.

At death the saints shall be perfect in holiness.

This perfection shall be attained, not after the separation of the soul from the body, but in, or immediately before that separation. With this the spiritual instincts of God's people agree. They feel that, unless sin is entirely destroyed before they die, it shall not be afterward, and they often fear that death may come before they are fully sanctified; but God will cause the processes of physical decay and of sanctification to meet at death, nor will he make any mistake in the matter. Though the soul is perfect in holiness at death, it leaves the body to lie in the grave where it shall dissolve into dust unto the resurrection, when, reanimated by the soul, it shall be raised to live for ever in glory like Christ's glorious body.

2. The maturity of believers shall consist in perfect holiness and blessedness that will not end for ever and ever. The ransomed in glory shall be safe from all troubles, temptations, and everything else that might mar or disturb their felicity through communion with God and with each other. Then the mystical body of Christ shall be complete, for it shall be without defect through absence of a single member that was intended to be in it according to God's original plan.

We observe in conclusion:—1. That as the childhood of believers is exposed to many dangers, owing to its weakness and inexperience, they should diligently use all the means appointed by God to promote their own growth in grace and knowledge.

2. To be healthy we must love the truth, otherwise our religion will be merely fanciful. Unless we are spiritually enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, we shall be exposed to all the novel opinions that may obtain popular favour for the time. "The word of Christ" should "dwell in us richly in all wisdom," that we may be able to teach and admonish "one another." Col. iii. 16.

3. Without union to Christ no one can grow in love, nor can he edify the body of Christ. God offers in the Gospel to unite to Christ those who are yet separate from him, and he assures those who see the danger of their state that he will effectually unite to Christ all that truly desire it.

DISCOURSE XXXIV.

IMMORALITY INCONSISTENT WITH GROWTH IN HOLINESS.

Eph. iv. 17-19: "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."

HERE the apostle resumes the exhortation with which the chapter begins, but which was interrupted by the digression extending from the fourth to

the sixteenth verse, and which contains reasons for faithfully pursuing the course recommended, and sincerely renouncing the wicked customs of the other Gentiles. The connection is: "I, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace;" because the church is one body animated by one Spirit, and has one God, the Father, and one Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, in reward of his obedience unto death, received gifts for men, and was exalted that he might bestow them in order that the church should grow from childhood unto perfection, to "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Having stated the ground of his exhortation with minute clearness, he adds: "This, I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind." He knew that he not only spake with authority, but also that as he and the Lord were of one mind on the subject, he acted as his witness in the matter, and testified that it was not permitted to them to walk in the wicked courses of the heathen.

I purpose then to direct your attention to the wickedness of the heathens, the causes of their wickedness, and the duty of Christians with regard to it.

I. Notice the wickedness of the heathens.

The apostle here refers to licentiousness because that vice was universally prevalent. Because the other Gentiles were past feeling, they had therefore "given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work uncleanness with greediness," and Ephesus was in the apostles' days notorious for the dissolute lives of its inhabitants. The religious rites performed in the worship of Diana fostered this species of immorality, for on certain festivals licentiousness was a part of the ceremonies. At the present day, as well as then, the state of morals is very low in heathen lands, as Missionaries testify. Besides being impure, they are dishonest, treacherous, and cruel, nor are Mohammedans in these respects better than the worshippers of idols. It were well if such gross vices were confined to the heathens, for, notwithstanding the restraining power of the gospel, many vile sins prevail among Christian communities. Indeed nothing can save men from sin but the power of the grace of God. People who are truly interested in the welfare of their fellow-men are often anxiously concerned at the increasing manifestations of prevailing wickedness in various parts of the land, though religious ordinances were never more abundantly administered, and moral reformers never made more strenuous efforts to diminish the evil. Vices are like weeds which grow though often cut down; until their roots are destroyed the land will be infested with them, nor is there any guarantee that

a man who has been addicted to lewdness, debauchery, or any other irregularity, is permanently reformed until he is the subject of the saving operations of the Holy Ghost. It is the Spirit that can convince him of the insufficiency of all human means, and cause him to rely on God to save him.

II. Notice the causes of heathen wickedness.

1. Vanity. "Other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind."

The word "vanity" in Scripture means more than conceit, emptiness, and fondness for display: it signifies moral wrong and folly. Idols are called vanities because their worship is sinful, and because it is foolish to place confidence in them. The prophet sets forth the absurdity of idolatry when he says: "They that make a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they are their own witnesses: they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing? Behold all his fellows shall be ashamed; and the workmen, they are of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed together. The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth: he drinketh no water, and is

faint. The carpenter stretcheth out his rule, he marketh it out with a line, he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man ; that it may remain in the house. He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest : he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it. Then shall it be for a man to burn : for he will take thereof, and warm himself ; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread ; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it ; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. He burneth part thereof in the fire ; with part thereof he eateth flesh ; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied : yea, he warmeth him and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire : and the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image : he falleth down unto it, and saith, Deliver me ; for thou art my god." Isa. xlv. 9-17. Human fancy, when a man is not enlightened by the Holy Ghost, forms foolish notions, which lead to wicked and immoral practices. The apostle says that, instead of retaining the knowledge of God, men "became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God gave them up to unclean-

ness, through the lusts of their own hearts." Rom. i. 21-24.

2. A further cause of this wickedness is ignorance. "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance there is in them."

The want of the knowledge of God leads to vain imaginations in religion and philosophy, and these imaginations in their turn produce idolatry, heresies, atheism, and immorality. Some hold that a man's belief is of no great consequence, because there are good men connected with all sects. This view places truth and error much on the same level, because it supposes that it is a matter of no great difference whether we hold the one or the other; but that is contrary to the representations of the Bible, where we are taught that true knowledge includes love to God and to goodness. The holy are there said to be wise, and the wicked are said to be foolish. Truth and holiness are connected with one another, as light and heat are in the same sunbeam. "Be wise, . . . O ye kings, be instructed, ye judges of the earth." Ps. ii. 10. "The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple." Ps. xix. 7. "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works." Ps. xiv. 1. "He hath left off to be wise, and to do good." Ps. xxxvi. 3. "O LORD, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very

deep. A brutish man knoweth not, neither doth a fool understand this." Ps. xcii. 5, 6. There cannot be holiness without knowledge of Divine things; for to know God is eternal life, and those who are ignorant of him are sure to be depraved. The saints are the children of light, whereas the wicked are the children of darkness. It becomes us therefore to seek the saving knowledge of God, and to endeavour to obtain correct views of all that he has revealed to us in his word; for it is of vital importance to us what principles we believe.

3. A still further cause of wickedness is hatred to God. "Being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance there is in them."

Ignorance of God produces alienation of heart, and that again causes such a perversion of mind that men misapprehend what he has made known concerning himself, his character, and moral government. Because men hated his holiness and justice they so far disbelieved them that they fancied him to be like themselves. When in this way fear of retribution was weakened, men followed their corrupt inclinations in the indulgence of their depraved lusts. In a similar spirit many would like to flatter themselves that there is no future punishment, or, that at most, it shall terminate; but when good men advocate this view, as is sometimes the case, it must be on account of some spiritual or intellectual infirmities, of which Satan takes

advantage that he may make them instruments to soothe wicked men in unconcern while they live in ungodliness. Alienation from God and indulgence in vice pervert the understanding, so that those who live in excess have no just views of self-restraint. A drunkard regards sobriety as an intolerable abridgment of liberty, the licentious man does not appreciate purity, and covetous people have no just views of the pleasure of benevolence. Vice destroys both mind and body; it so weakens the mental powers that it unfits them for vigorous intellectual efforts. Because missionaries find the heathens stupid, with their consciences destitute of moral power, they have to use means to awaken their intellects that they may stimulate their moral sense. The same effect is produced by vice on the ungodly in Christian lands. Wicked men may be naturally gifted, but their moral discernment is seriously impaired. They may have intellectual abilities, but uprightness seldom regulates their life.

4. Insensibility. They are "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance there is in them, because of the blindness," that is, hardness "of their heart: who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness."

The natural man cannot discern the things of God, and therefore his hard heart is destitute of holiness. The blind are experimentally ignorant of the glorious beauty of creation, because they cannot see,

nor can you enable them to see by causing light to shine around them unless the power of vision be given to them. The clearest gospel light may shine on the unregenerate, but unless the eyes of their mind be spiritually opened they cannot discern the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and so their heart continues obdurate. This hardness is progressive in its nature, so that it goes on from one degree to another, until, unless removed, those who are under its power are "past feeling," that is, insensible to any checks of conscience, so as to be without compunction when they commit wicked acts. Men in this sad state give themselves up to excesses with greediness. Because their lusts are insatiable, they indulge them as far as they are able. See then the fearful effects of mistaken views of God. It is at a serious risk that men depart from sound doctrine, and, trusting in their own heart, carry on vain speculations concerning Divine things.

III. Notice the apostle's exhortation to Christians with reference to the duty of abstaining from the wickedness that was prevalent among the heathens. "This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind."

1. We observe that wicked men may be raised from their degradation, to faith and holiness. The

form of the exhortation may be regarded as implying this interesting truth. "Walk not henceforth as other Gentiles walk." If the expression does not show this to be the mind of the apostle the beginning of the second chapter puts the point beyond doubt. "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Eph. ii. 1-3. The possibility of the salvation of notorious sinners was announced by the prophets hundreds of years before the days of the apostles. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Isa. lv. 7. God solemnly declares that he desires the repentance and salvation of such sinners. "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel." Ezek. xxxiii. 11. You see then that no man, however guilty and degraded he may be, is excluded from the offer of restoration to

God's favour, and to holiness. The Ephesians and Corinthians are exhibited in Scripture as remarkable specimens of an idolatrous people who were much sunk in profligacy, but who by grace turned to the Lord with true repentance. Not only does the insensibility of dissolute sinners bind them in impenitence, but the confidence that many have in their virtues, morality, and religion, prevents them from seeing their need of repentance. In the days of the Saviour far more publicans and sinners followed him than did the religious, precise, and respected Scribes and Pharisees.

2. Though Christians have turned to the Lord with penitence, they must no more walk in former wickedness seeing they entered into an engagement with God to cultivate holiness. God pardoned their sins, and received them into his favour, not that they should live in wickedness, but in obedience to his will. Though they were justified freely by his grace, and, in their case, where sin abounded, grace did much more abound, yet with reference to this interesting fact the apostle asks: "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" and firmly replies to the profane supposition: "God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Rom. vi. 1, 2. In our regeneration the love of sin in our heart was slain, so that its supremacy over us was destroyed; and when we laid hold of the righteousness of Christ by faith we declared in repentance that we died to sin.

If therefore it is wrong in any people to live in sin, and walk as the heathens, it is doubly so in believers, who have solemnly engaged to live no longer therein. By relapsing into former vicious irregularities, professors most seriously dishonour Christ, and expose themselves to everlasting perdition.

3. Not only are believers bound to forsake wickedness, but sinners are also commanded to turn from sin to God and holiness. To induce them to hearken to his voice in this matter God presents the most powerful motives. He promises pardon to all who come to him with penitence: "I shall heal their backslidings, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him." Hosea xiv. 4. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." Prov. xxviii. 13. Christ came to seek and to save the lost. "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Matt. ix. 13. When discoursing to the people, he said: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." John vi. 37. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." John iii. 36.

DISCOURSE XXXV.

LEARNING CHRIST.

Eph. iv, 20-24: "But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

IT appears from statements in this epistle that there were Judaizing teachers in Ephesus who maintained that as Jewish believers were more favoured by God, they enjoyed higher privileges than Gentile Christians; and that, besides the divisions and jealousies that might be caused by these, the church was exposed to the seductions of the philosophy that prevailed in the city. Learned heathens taught that since "right reason," as they called it, was the rule of conduct, those who lived according to nature lived correctly. This maxim permitted each of them to indulge his own lusts, so that the wisest and best of them practised many gross vices. In his exhortation to holiness, the apostle, referring to the immorality that was the result of heathen education, says: "But ye have not so learned Christ." Your knowledge of him

does not recommend such immoral conduct as they practise. Let us then consider the instruction imparted by Christ to believers, and the practical results of it.

I. Notice the instructions imparted by Christ to his people.

1. The subject wherein they are taught is Christ himself. "Ye have not so learned Christ."

This expression is unusual, for it is met with nowhere else in the New Testament. We speak of learning systems, methods, and skill in doing things; but we do not say that we learn a person. At first sight the statement seems obscure. By it some understand learning what is revealed about Christ, such as his mission, his works, and his doctrines; but it seems to mean something more. The word of God speaks of preaching Christ, and by this more is intended than merely to preach concerning him, it means to preach himself, and to set him forth as the supreme object of our affectionate confidence; so, then, to learn Christ is to acquire the knowledge of him as the Son of God, our Redeemer from wrath, our Saviour from sin, and our generous friend. If we learn Christ as such we cannot certainly live in sin as the heathens and other ungodly people do, for the Sun of Righteousness has risen in our hearts "with healing in his wings." Mal. iv. 2. This light purifies the mind, so that those who are enlightened by it "are no longer darkness, but

light in the Lord," and therefore "walk as children of light." Eph. v. 8. Their knowledge of Christ is experimental, as are the light and heat of the sun to those who are exposed to them.

2. The instructor is Christ.

No man, however mighty his intellect, however enlightened, and however diligent in his application to mental pursuits, can, with his natural powers, attain to this knowledge; nor can any one, not even those truly enlightened therein, impart it to others. God alone can teach us successfully in this department of knowledge. When, in reply to Christ's question, "Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God," Christ said to him: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Mat. xvi. 16, 17. The Psalmist, sensible of his own inability to acquire this knowledge, prayed to God, saying: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." Ps. cxix. 18. That blind sinners might be enlightened, Christ is appointed a prophet to instruct them, and, therefore, no man has an excuse for continuing in ignorance, for he earnestly invites them to come to learn of him, with an assurance that he will give them the necessary instruction. For this end he sends forth messengers whom he accompanies to make their word effectual, "to open men's eyes, and to turn them from darkness

to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Acts xxvi. 18.

3. In the process of instruction he causes them to hear his voice, and teaches them the truth as it is in himself.

To hear the voice of Christ savingly is not to perceive with the natural ears, but to apprehend it spiritually so as to receive the truth affectionately. The words, "if so be," do not express doubt, but is a supposition. He takes it for granted that they heard Christ and were obedient to his voice, and, therefore, had not so learned him as to live like other Gentiles in ungodly immoralities.

When Christ begins to teach effectually, his first act is to cause them to hear him that he may arouse their attention by an exercise of his Divine power. "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." John v. 25. To accomplish this he uses several means in connection with which he acts in such ways as he sees proper. He arrested the attention of Paul, when on his way to Damascus to persecute the saints, by an external manifestation of his glory accompanied by an audible voice which said: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" It was not by the brightness of the light which shone around him, or the words which were spoken, that he was awakened from his spiritual sleep, but by the immediate agency of Christ,

whereby spiritual sensibilities were created in him. Usually these effects are produced without such extraordinary accompaniments; for while the Word of God is either read or heard, Christ by his Spirit quickens to hear, and enlightens to recognize himself as speaking things of supreme importance which concern the person spoken to. Multitudes hear the preaching of the gospel who do not recognize Christ; and we might actually hear his voice without knowing him savingly. Paul's fellow-travellers saw the light, and heard the sound of the words that were spoken to him, but we are not told that any saving effects were produced upon them. Many who heard Christ preach during his life on earth, and who also conversed with him, did not see him as the Son of God, just as many who heard his voice on Mount Sinai and saw the terrible displays of his glory that he made on that occasion, still in their ignorance of him continued disobedient as before. Unless people become savingly acquainted with him there is no guarantee against their return to a life of immorality even after they have reformed, nor can they increase in the true knowledge of him. It is those who have savingly heard him whom he teaches in the truth as it is in him, so as to know his moral excellence. This instruction is not merely speculative, but eminently practical; for as the disciples of Christ see that he is holy, they earnestly endeavour to be holy likewise.

II. This leads me to notice the practical result produced by the instructions imparted by Christ.

His disciples are taught to "put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts," "be renewed in the spirit of their mind, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." This striking figure of putting off the old man, and putting on the new, means sanctification, including mortification of the flesh and living to righteousness. The allusion is to changing one's garments, a removing of old, ragged, and unseemly clothes, and putting on new, clean, and becoming raiments. As a man's dress first strikes the eyes of others so that their attention is arrested, so does the manifestation of people's character by their conduct attract the notice of those who see them. It is, however, to be observed that the casting off the old man, and putting on the new man, referred to here, do not mean regeneration, but growth in holiness; for it is those who have heard Christ and have learned him that are also taught by him to follow his example.

1. Believers turn from their former conversation; they renounce the flesh and its works, they "put off the old man."

We are commanded to "cast off the works of darkness," to "put away lying," to "put off anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication," and to "lay

aside all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness." We are to put off our corrupt nature with its acts, and the old sinful practices in which we formerly lived. "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds." Col. iii. 9. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Rom. vi. 6. Paul calls this "old man" himself. "For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin." Rom. vii. 14. "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." Rom. vii. 18. He also calls it the "law in his members warring against the law of his mind, also "the flesh" opposing the Spirit. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Gal. v. 17. If we are quickened by Divine power through the implanting of spiritual life in us, we crucify ourselves, that is, the old man, or corrupt nature. It is not destroyed in regeneration, though a new element is infused in our soul, whereby our depravity is daily mortified. The purified conscience condemns the former conversation, and the new heart abhors it. It is therefore restrained daily, and its desires are denied to it according to the measure of grace given. The old man is said to be corrupt, and this means, not only polluted, but also destructive. It is that deadly element of moral decay

which tends to perdition that is to be put off; for unless continually mortified, it will destroy us soul and body for ever. We should realize the solemn fact that we have in us this fatal principle, which, unless overcome, will surely ruin us. "He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption," that is, eternal death. Gal. vi. 8. This is the inevitable fruit of sin. The passions cherished in this life will remain in the soul through death to rage with terrible power in the future life; and the fleshly lusts now indulged will revive with the body at the resurrection, but there shall be nothing to satisfy their violent cravings. If we would escape this fearful destiny we must "put off the old man." As nothing but spiritual life can enable sinners to mortify the lusts of the flesh they should cry earnestly to God for it. Besides the destructive tendency of the old man, it is deceitful; for it "is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." The apostle calls it "sin that dwelleth in me," and says that it deceived and slew him. Many are hardened "through the deceitfulness of sin." Heb. iii. 13. A man is enticed to debauchery by his own desires, seconded by companions who represent to him that such indulgences are necessary to friendship, and that what is spent in such good-fellowship is a proof of generosity. He soon begins to regard the virtuous as mean, selfish, and precise. The covetous consider their sordid worldliness as prudence, and, if successful in gathering substance, they are confirmed in their mistake

by the respect shewn to them by their friends. The dishonest dealer persuades himself that truthfulness is impossible in business on account of the unreasonableness of customers, and the competition that he has to contend with. The profane swearer justifies himself by the thought that he means no harm. In this way vices appear to many so much like virtues that those who live in them suppose that they either do their duty, or that they have good reason for their conduct. Paul thought that he served God when he persecuted the saints. Not a few are so much deceived that they call evil good, and good evil. Such is the deceitfulness of the lusts of the old man. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" Jer. xvii. 9.

2. Believers not only mortify their lusts, but also cultivate holiness. They are "renewed in the spirit of their mind; and they put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

The expression "be renewed," or "be made new," means either regeneration, as, "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost," or sanctification, as here and elsewhere. "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." Rom. xii. 2. In both cases it is the work of God, a process of renewal from beginning to end. The apostle says that "the inward man is renewed day by day." 2 Cor. iv. 6. The word here rendered "be renewed" means "be made young."

that is, keep the spiritual life, created in you by God, youthful, healthy, thrifty, and beautiful.

The subject of this Christian renewal is the spirit of the mind; not merely the outward acts, manner of life, dispositions, and temper, but the principle of life which is the foundation of our conduct. Sanctification is not merely in the external deportment, but also in the heart. There is often considerable reformation in conduct while the real character remains altogether ungodly; but many do not know that anything better than this apparent improvement is needed, so that several who have some success therein are deluded into false hope. This is, however, no more than counterfeit holiness, a mere outside covering of what is base within. Though we are easily imposed upon by such spurious sanctification, God, who knows the fraud, will expose it in his own way when the proper time comes. Moral reformers, including ministers, who are ignorant of the work of grace in the soul are only manufacturers of counterfeits. It is but sorry work to "heal the hurt of the people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace." Jer. vi. 14. The true renewal begins in the heart, and proves its genuineness by manifesting itself in the life; it strips off the old man, that filthy garment that covers the natural man. However much a believer once admired the new patches that, before he was spiritually changed, he used to sew on it, he now abhors the whole of it, both

the best and worst, because he sees it to be altogether an abomination, so filthy as not fit to appear before the holy God. Simultaneous with this divesting process, and as the cause of it, the new man is put on, "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." This garment is made in the image of God, which consists in righteousness and holiness, that is, rectitude and godliness. Such people are just to their neighbours, and pious toward God. Because they desire to discharge their duty to God and man, they find true pleasure in the cultivation of all virtues. There are some who cultivate uprightness toward men, and are honourable in dealing with them, but they defraud God inasmuch as they ignore his claims upon them. These refuse to yield their hearts to him, though he is absolutely entitled to this homage. Some refuse to render religious worship, though he imperatively demands it, and though others, who acknowledge his right to obedience, take a part in his service, they do nothing from affectionate regard to him, but act only for themselves. There are many religious people who are regular in public devotions, who do not deal honourably with their neighbours. Both these classes neither put off the old man, nor put on the new man, because they have not heard and learned Christ. Because they have not yet received the new man, they cannot, therefore, put it on. They are under the power of the deceitful lusts, because the truth has not yet made them free.

Observations :

1. If we have heard Christ, been taught by him, and learned him, we strive to be like him. The knowledge of Christ has a transforming power. "We all," says the apostle, "with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. iii. 18.

2. Let us beware of the deceitfulness of sin : for there is in us a strong tendency to believe error. People, who have intelligently embraced Scriptural principles, are sometimes amazed at the credulity of those who are carried away into error by the most transparent sophistries. Such, however, is our character that we are easily led into practical mistakes. When we fall into delusions we adhere to such errors with great obstinacy. It is seldom that a person reared in true principles in youth, and who afterwards departed from them, is afterwards recovered to sound doctrines. For that reason the apostle says : "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject." Titus iii. 10. There is no more hope of his recovery. From error there is no protection for us until we receive the knowledge of Christ into our hearts, so that a holy desire to grow up in conformity with him may be produced in our minds.

3. Unless the new man is created in you, sinners, so that you hear and learn Christ, the old man will

destroy you, as you cannot in your present condition destroy it. It has immense power to corrupt and ruin. Think, therefore, of your misery if you shall not be delivered from its fatal influence. Christ is now ready to teach you, if you desire to be instructed, that you may know how to put off the old man and put on the new.

DISCOURSE XXXVI.

PUTTING OFF THE OLD MAN AND PUTTING ON THE NEW.

Eph. iv. 25—v. 1, 2: "Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. Be ye angry, and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour."

THE apostle, taking it for granted that the Ephesian Christians heard Christ, were taught by him, and

learned the saving knowledge of him experimentally, exhorted them as disciples to cultivate holiness by putting off the old man, and putting "on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Having thus enforced the general duty, he gave examples of the vices that should be forsaken and of the virtues that should be cultivated.

I. Notice the wicked customs that believers should forsake.

1. Falsehood. "Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour."

This is a very offensive part of the character of "the old man," for there are few more hopeless people than liars. It is a vice that we so much expect all true Christians to avoid with diligence that we are not a little surprised when we discover that a good man is guilty of it. Lying does violence to our nature; for, notwithstanding our corruption, we respect truth more than falsehood; otherwise we would not believe each other at all. The tendency of this vice is to dissolve human society by destroying confidence in each other. It is represented in the Scriptures as peculiarly the product of the devil. "When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar and the father of it." John viii. 44. Considering the baseness of this practice it may appear strange that the apostle saw any cause for exhorting the Ephesians to put it away,

as you may think that, being Christians, they would not to any serious extent indulge in so despicable a vice. We must, however, remember that lying is universal among the heathen in modern times, and that it was equally prevalent among them in ancient days. Idolaters, Mohammedans, and the professors of corrupt forms of Christianity, are generally so treacherously untruthful that no one is safe in trusting their word even when they speak on oath. Missionaries and others tell us that with the smallest inducement the heathens speak falsehood without hesitation or remorse. The Ephesians were, from their childhood, used to untruthfulness, and as they were but recently converted, their minds needed to be further enlightened to see the sinfulness of many customs which they thought innocent. This may be seen in the Negroes on this continent; for, though professing the Christian religion, on becoming acquainted with them, you find that you cannot always believe what they say. But it is not only among heathens that falsehood prevails, it is practised too much among Christian nations, with a skill that heathens can hardly think of; for often the truth is spoken in words, but something is designedly omitted that, if said, would make an impression the opposite of what is wished. Here there is conscience of sin, and, therefore, a crafty contrivance to escape it; but such persons not only deceive others, but often impose upon themselves. The object of many by their

duplicity is to retain a reputation for truthfulness, or to evade the law. Such are far more guilty in the sight of God than ignorant heathens. When persons in words or actions represent things differently from what they know them to be, they are guilty of falsehood, and even if they believe their own statements to be true when they are not, they are guilty, unless they suppose that they have reasonable ground for giving credit to them. This wicked custom should not be practised by believers, because they are brethren, seeing that they are members of the same mystical body. The physical body is seriously deranged if the eyes deceive the hands and feet; and it ill becomes the members of the body of Christ to impose upon each other.

2. Wrath. "Be ye angry, and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath."

This implies that all anger is not sinful; a sudden excitement producing an effort to defend ourselves from an injury received or threatened is involuntary, and consequently innocent, and indignation against cruelty or ingratitude is lawful. Christ was angry with the perverse Jews "for the hardness of their hearts." Mark iii. 5. This passage, however, shows that there is danger that such anger may become sinful. If cherished until a determined desire of revenge possesses the mind, it genders malice. It should, therefore, be restrained and suppressed as soon as it

has accomplished its legitimate purpose. A man should not sleep on it, nor deliberately meditate a requital for the injury done or offered to be done to him. If such displeasure is permitted to pass its proper bounds, an opportunity is given to Satan to possess the mind, and to fill it with cruel purposes. We should not thus "give place to the devil," nor yield to his suggestions to foster unkind feelings by keeping up a spirit of resentment; for "all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and evil-speaking" should "be put away from us with all malice." When anger is nursed in the bosom it causes bitterness, which may become rage, ending in high words and violent acts, or it may lead to wicked slander. Evil feelings, when harboured, are poison to him who cherishes them, and venomous towards the objects of ill-will. The command, therefore, is to lay aside these corroding thoughts which prompt us to hurt others.

3. Theft. "Let him that stole steal no more: but let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."

The passage might be rendered, "let the thief steal no more," but the translators probably thought it unlikely that Ephesian Christians were thieves then, and, therefore, they expressed it in the past tense. "him that stole." We may see from the decalogue and the sermon on the mount that such statements are

far-reaching; and, therefore, we understand this to mean, not only vulgar and open theft, but all dishonesty in dealing with others. The passage expressly alludes to one class in particular—the indolent, who are necessarily thieves. In the Epistle to the Thessalonians the apostle refers to some who walked “disorderly, working not at all, but were busybodies”; and these he earnestly exhorted to work with quietness, and to “eat their own bread.” “For,” says he, “if any will not work, neither should he eat.” With thieves able-bodied vagrants may be classed, those who make a living by administering to the follies of the community, and all who receive people’s money without giving an equivalent for it—such as showmen, play-actors, and gamblers; nor are the dupes of the last named class less thieves than those who beguile them, because they desire to win money without giving value for it. Idle gossips, who waste their time gadding about among their neighbours when they should be usefully employed, are thieves, seeing that they live at some one’s expense without contributing an honest share to their own support.

4. Obscenity. “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”

The word here rendered “corrupt” means rotten. From this we see that such conversation, like a putrid

carcase left unburied under the heat of the sun, fills the surrounding moral atmosphere with its noisome stench. This abominable vice, which has always been common among the heathens, prevails also in Christian lands, particularly among the lower classes. Many young men practise this filthy talk, and thereby corrupt each other. Some are so zealous in this department of the devil's service as to write or engrave filthy words in places where they shall be read by others; nor are some females free from this vile use of their tongues. No person can speak obscenely without defiling himself and those who hear him; for "the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." James iii. 6. If a believer is guilty of this vice he grieves the "Holy Spirit whereby he is sealed to the day of redemption," and provokes him to withdraw his comforts from his soul, and upon the ungodly who indulge in it he may cease to produce any more serious impressions.

II. Notice the opposite virtues that Christians should cultivate.

Evil habits can only be successfully overcome by the diligent practice of the opposite virtues, for a negative morality is really impossible. Weeds may be temporarily destroyed, but unless the ground is properly

cultivated and sown with good seed the same noxious plants or others equally offensive will soon spring up. To destroy sin we must have grace to delight in holiness, so that we may find pleasure in doing the will of God in the practice of virtue.

1. To avoid falsehood we must love and cultivate truthfulness. "Speak every man truth with his neighbour; for we are members one of another."

The motive here referred to ought to have influence with believers, for it is the relation in which they stand to Christ and to each other as members of his mystical body. For Christians to deceive one another is as unnatural as it would be for the eyes to deceive the feet or hands. The obligation to veracity rests on the excellence of truth, the revealed will of God, and the rights of others; but the relationship of believers to each other as members of the mystical body of Christ, when realized, powerfully prompts to faithfulness and truthfulness. As we expect that our brethren will not defraud us, we should treat them with equal honour and fidelity. If we do not adhere to the truth because we love it, we are sure to give way to falsehood.

2. To avoid bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil-speaking, and malice, we must cultivate a calm and forgiving spirit. "Let not the sun go down on your wrath."

To bear injuries done to us, and not harbour vin-

dictive desires, we must appreciate the kindness and patience of Christ towards ourselves, so that as he has forgiven us, we shall be ready to forgive others. Christians are bound to be gentle, meek, and forgiving, nor are they permitted to render "evil for evil." Unless we cherish this benevolent disposition wrath will prevail in us, and the devil will fill our minds with malice.

3. To avoid dishonesty we must cultivate industry. "Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good."

Every godly man is, as a rule, diligent in some useful occupation whatever may be his position in society; he knows that he cannot, in justice to others, eat the bread of idleness. Paul, the great apostle, laboured with his own hands to procure support for himself and his companions. Labour is necessary to physical and moral health, and though toil and the sweat of the brow are the punishment of sin, all work is not, for Adam in the state of innocence was placed in "the garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it." Christ elevated labour, and made it honourable by his own example. It is hard to think that a true disciple of Christ is lazy, as by so acting he refuses to be conformed to his master. We are bound to be diligent in our calling, not only that we may be above temptation to all dishonest practices, but also that we

may be able to relieve the needy when they need our aid.

4. To avoid obscenity we must cultivate purity in speech and thought. "Let your conversation be good to the use of edifying, that it may administer grace to the hearers."

Believers should be pure in conversation, seeing that God is pure, Christ is pure, the Holy Ghost, who dwells in them, is pure, and heaven, which is their eternal home, is pure. Believers are the temples of God wherein he dwells, and his habitation should be kept clean and in good order. Obscenity in speech is the filthy overflow of a polluted heart, where the devil, the chief of unclean spirits, dwells. As the children of the wicked one spread corruption around them, the children of God are the salt of the earth, and should, therefore, speak so as to minister grace to those who hear them. Speech is an invaluable gift, for by it man is distinguished from all creatures in the world, and it raises him above them to an immense distance. We see, then, that we should carefully employ this wonderful power to the honour of God and the welfare of our fellow-men. It is base to pervert a gift so noble to vile purposes; for it would be better for a man to be dumb than to prostitute his speech to the service of the devil. We are bound to aim at the benefit of others by our conversation, and if we honestly strive to do so, we are not likely to say what we shall have

cause to regret. "The tongue of the just is as choice silver." Prov. x. 20. "A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things." Mat. xii. 35. The apostle James says that the tongue, though a small member, has such great power for good and evil that he who controls it is a mighty man. "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able to bridle the whole body." James iii. 2.

5. To destroy the old man and strengthen the new we must imitate God. "Be ye, therefore, followers of God as dear children."

We are not only as friends of God to be numbered among the followers of Christ, but we are to act as he does, so that, like him, we shall be "kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us." We should also "as dear children walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." This is the reason why we should love one another. We should be like Christ, so that we should neither defraud our brethren nor cherish vindictive feelings against them, nor take their property either by violence or deceit, nor corrupt them by impure speaking. Instead of doing these injuries to them we should be ready to lay down our lives for them, as Christ gave himself up to death for us. This is the great evidence of God's love to his people, and it

should be the great motive to stimulate us to "put off the old man" and to "put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness." "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." John xv. 13. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." 1 John iii. 16. Christ's sacrifice not only satisfied Divine justice, but the benevolence displayed therein pleased God; and if we love the brethren we likewise please him, for "God is love."

Observations :

1. Believers ought to realize the love of Christ to them, that they may be stimulated to love their brethren, and be ready to make all needed sacrifices for their welfare.
2. In injuring others in any way we harm ourselves, as we provoke God to chastise us for the wrong done, and we grieve the Holy Spirit if we allow ourselves to speak obscenity to pollute ourselves and others thereby. We must not utter such language, nor even listen to it with complacency.
3. If ungodly people retain the filthy garments of the old man they will be poisoned with putridity, so as to become altogether loathsome, and fit only for the receptacle of the moral filth of the universe. This consideration should cause loose speakers to pause before they give further license to their unruly tongues.

DISCOURSE XXXVII.

CAUSES OF GOD'S WRATH.

Eph. v. 3-7: "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for, because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them."

IN his exhortation to the Ephesians to put off the old man and put on the new, the apostle refers to lying, wrath, theft, and obscenity, denouncing them as wickedness, and as antidotes to these vices he urged them to cultivate truthfulness, forbearance, industry, and purity of speech. From these sins against neighbours he proceeded to warn them against sins that more directly affected themselves, and advanced the most weighty reasons for abstaining from them. "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these

things cometh the wrath of God on the children of disobedience."

The sins enumerated in this passage may be classified: Licentiousness, covetousness, and levity.

I. Notice the vices which the apostle denounces.

1. Licentiousness. "But fornication, and all uncleanness . . . let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints.

As this sin universally prevailed among the heathens, the Christians in Ephesus, who, before their conversion to the faith of the gospel, practised them like their neighbours, were in danger of relapsing into them, it was therefore necessary by an exposure of their wickedness, to warn them of the danger to which they exposed those who indulged in them. The inhabitants of Ephesus and other heathen cities practised lewdness in connection with their religious worship, because this was supposed to be grateful to some of their gods and goddesses. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that gross impurities prevailed. We are informed in our own day, by those who live among them, that heathens are now equally immoral. You will perhaps say that there is no pressing reason for warning modern Christians against these vices, seeing that they are refined by culture, civilization, and gospel light. The apostle says that they should "not be once named among" us, and why then refer to them at all?

If you say so, you misunderstand the expression ; for Christ, the prophets, and the apostles both named and denounced them. As bound to declare the whole counsel of God, we are not at liberty to omit any part of it because it may be disagreeable to set it forth. The meaning is : Let not the commission of these immoralities be once named among you. Though Christian communities cultivate purity more than heathens, yet there is reason to fear that this class of vices prevails more extensively than many are aware of. Some may suppose that, seeing illegitimate children are rare compared with what they were in older communities fifty years ago or so, people are become more virtuous. The improvement may be seriously doubted ; for knowledge in various departments is increased, so that many have learned how to prevent the results of their wickedness from becoming manifest, as may be seen from newspaper reports of sad consequences resulting from the failure of such attempts to conceal vice ; and what comes to light in that way is likely no more than a tithe of the evil. Those who have given the most attention to this subject find reason to believe that modern society is rotten to a considerable extent, and that, notwithstanding a large element of honour and purity, there is much moral putridity, in the land, not merely in cities and towns, but all over the country. There is cause to fear that religious meetings held at night and addressed by men

of more emotion than intelligence predispose to this class of sins ; for natural affections are excited whereby persons of both sexes are rendered more ready to speak to each other of their feelings with familiarity on their way home, and it has been known that on various occasions immorality has been the result. For that reason such meetings are not without danger, and it is clear that on all such occasions parents should accompany their families that, as far as possible, they may keep them under their eyes.

2. Without dwelling longer on this delicate subject let us pass on to the consideration of the next sin, covetousness.

This vice is often in the New Testament named in connection with licentiousness. "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators : yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters ; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner ; with such an one no not to eat." 1 Cor. v. 9-11 ; also, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10 ; 2 Tim. iii. 2-4 ; 2 Peter ii. 14 ; Mark vii. 21, 22 ; Rom. i. 29 ; Col. iii. 5. We see the Holy Ghost's estimate of covetousness, inasmuch as he classifies it with sensuality, and calls it idolatry. He declares it to be as odious as the most abominable

vices, and to be regarded in the same light as the grossest sins. Modern society not only looks upon covetousness with great indulgence, but holds it even in esteem; the vice is respected, while the name is hated. Few are disposed to rank a worldly man with libertines; but the apostle places them together in the same black catalogue, and declares that neither the one nor the other "hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." Whatever may be his position, the covetous man is but a grovelling idolater. His affections are so much set upon property that he cannot affectionately serve God. His desire for wealth is so insatiable that he devotes his energies to secure it. The apostle distinctly commands that no Christian give occasion for being charged with this sin any more than with licentiousness. How do we then stand with regard to it? Do we love the world more than God?

3. Let us consider the third class of vices, which may be summed in the expression, "levity." "Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient."

"Filthiness" in this place means obscene or disgusting conversation, the opposite of what is pure and beautiful. "Foolish talking" means that useless speaking and worthless small talk so prevalent in the world, and, though not so abominable as obscenity, it is beneath the dignity of rational creatures, but particularly of believers. "Jesting" here means light and mischie-

vous jokes. These vices are not becoming disciples of Christ. Though the worthless, the foolish, and the ungodly find pleasure in them, believers should avoid them. It is to be observed that courteousness, cheerfulness, and even sprightly humour are not forbidden; because pleasant wit, regulated by kindness and Christian charity, promotes friendship, and makes our intercourse agreeable and instructive. When such speech, however, is the result of folly or malice it is undoubtedly wicked, and always produces evil results. It is painful to hear grave men indulge in badinage and jokes at the expense of others, for it indicates an unfeeling heart. From a person that usually indulges in this vice you need not expect disinterested generosity. When we are cheerful our mirth should find expression in thanksgiving to God, that we may promote the edification of others.

II. Notice the reasons given by the apostle against these vices.

1. Indulgence in them does not become saints.

God said to his ancient people: "Ye shall be holy; for I, the LORD your God, am holy." Lev. xix. 2. "Sanctify yourselves, therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God." Lev. xx. 7. "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." Ex. xix. 6. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people." 1 Peter

ii. 9. Paul says to the Corinthians: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. It is altogether inconsistent with the sacred character of a people who are consecrated to God to defile themselves by sensuality, obscenity, and levity. Because the holy One who dwells in them as his temple is absolutely pure, he should not be insulted and grieved by unbecoming behaviour. Not only is licentiousness hateful to God, but levity is "not convenient"; that is, it is unseemly.

2. These vices should be avoided, because no one living in them can be an heir of God while this is the case. "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."

It is worthy of serious consideration that covetousness, the most common of all sins, is one of the most heinous before God, and also one of the most destructive to men; for it seems the name idolater is here applied exclusively to the covetous man. Putting the creature in place of the Creator is everywhere in Scripture denounced as the greatest sin. Its nature is not at all altered by the fact that a man who regards wealth as the chief good may be respectable and out-

wardly moral; for his covetousness permanently controls his ungodly heart at all times so as to draw his affections from God. We see then that wealth is ruinous, unless it is employed for the glory of God to promote the welfare of others. Many of the rich are entangled in a net which will bring them to perdition unless they shall be delivered by Divine power. The young man who came to Christ to consult him concerning the way of securing eternal life could not for its sake give his substance to the poor. Let us then understand that we cannot be heirs of God unless we cultivate purity in heart, life, and speech; and unless we regard our property as bestowed upon us by God to be used in obedience to him for the good of men.

3. These sins should be avoided because wicked men are punished on account of them. "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."

If you still ask, What things? We reply that they are sensuality, covetousness, and levity. In the days of the apostles heathen philosophers and unfaithful teachers of the Christian faith maintained that as carnal indulgence, the love of wealth, and frivolity were according to men's nature they were not seriously, if at all, sinful; and in modern days worldliness and light conversation are regarded as comparatively small vices, if vices at all. It is by many supposed that people

may safely indulge in these if they cultivate sobriety, truthfulness, honesty, and give some attention to religion ; but the apostle warns us of this fallacy : " Let no man deceive you with vain words : for because of these things cometh the wrath of God on the children of disobedience." Though forsaking vice will not justify a sinner, continuance therein will surely damn him, for as long as any one voluntarily practises what God forbids he cannot obtain pardon so as to be at peace with him. He may believe all that is revealed concerning Christ as the devils do and tremble, but as long as he lives in sin contrary to his own moral light he is under condemnation, because he acts in opposition to God who is necessarily opposed to him. One may suppose himself to have faith in Christ because he thinks that he was converted at a certain time, but unless he is daily putting off the old man which consists of lies, malice, theft, obscenity, licentiousness, covetousness, and levity, and is putting on the new man, he merely deceives himself, for Christ says : " Except ye repent, ye shall all perish." Luke xiii. 3.

DISCOURSE XXXVIII.

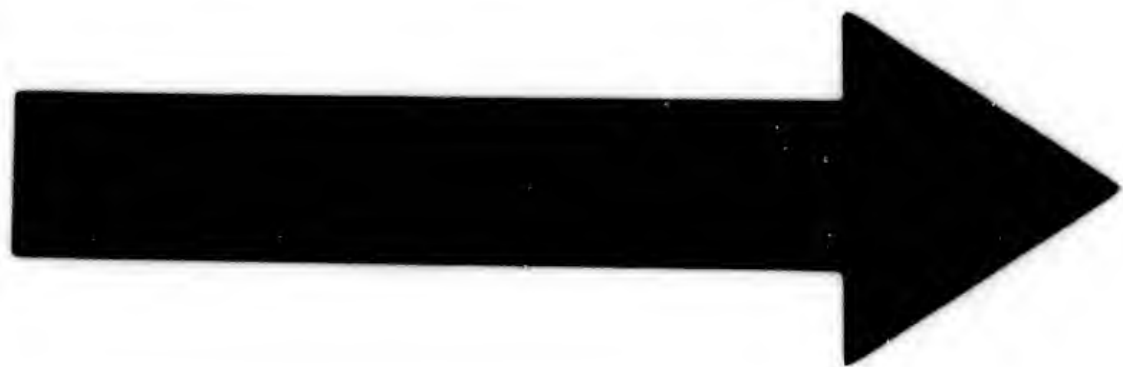
THE CHRISTIAN'S WALK.

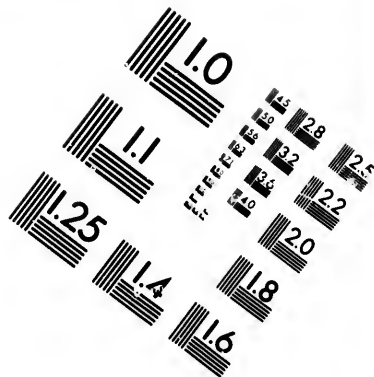
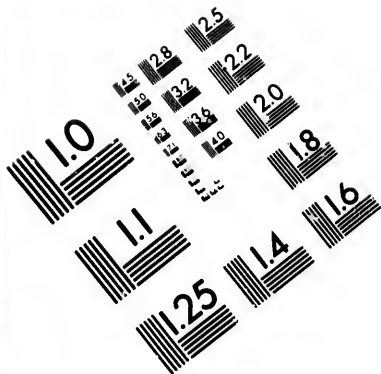
Eph. v. 8-12: "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light; (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret."

THE apostle here indicates that ignorance is a cause of the wickedness and immoralities that prevail in the world, particularly among the heathens. He said to the Ephesians: "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." As moral darkness produces such evil results, believers should "walk as children of light."

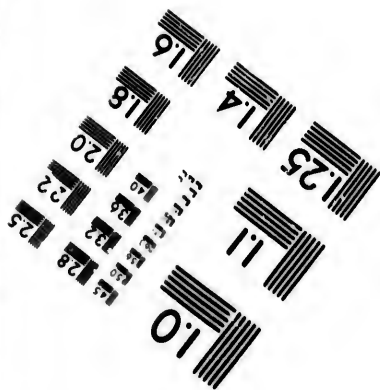
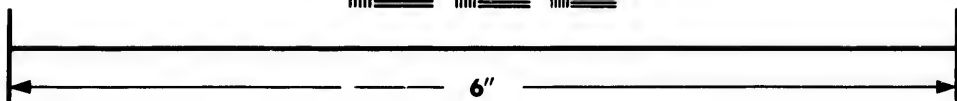
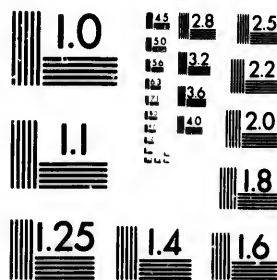
I. Notice the nature of the Christian's walk.

The holy walk of believers is imitation of God. "Be ye followers of God as dear children: and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour." As believers are God's children by regeneration and adoption, and seeing that Christ gave himself for them a sacrifice to God for their redemption, love



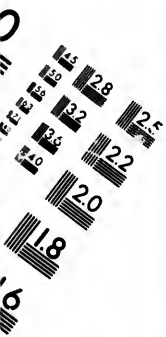


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and gratitude should regulate their life. The greatest evidence of God's love to them is the death of Christ. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." John xv. 13. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." 1 John iii. 16. We ought to imitate him in this, so as to be ready to deny ourselves, relieve the distress of others, and promote their comfort. We should do these not only for friends but also for enemies, for "Christ died for the ungodly," and "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Rom. v. 6, 8. This binds believers to love God so as to be regulated by that affection in all their acts. It is only as far as this is the case that their walking is pleasing to him as Christ's sacrifice was—a sweet smelling savour. All acts, whether good or bad in themselves, that are not done from this motive, are not acceptable.

II. Notice the manner of the Christian's walk.

Believers are followers of God by a spotless life. "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret."

In morals what is not useful is injurious, what is not good is evil. It is therefore the duty of Christians to

take no part in worthless practices. Those who find sin so congenial that they delight in the society of evil-doers, are such as find no pleasure in fellowship with God and his people. Men are attracted to what is agreeable to their taste, and repelled by what is contrary to their character. Those who love God hate sin, but those who love sin hate God and his people. The children of light should not walk in darkness as wicked men do. Their duty with regard to evil works is twofold; to have no part in them, and to reprove them. Though some intercourse with ungodly men is unavoidable, yet we should not have fellowship with them in their sins. Those who join evil-doers in their vices, show that they have pleasure in such conduct, and prove themselves to be ungodly, whatever their profession of religion and virtue may be. Seeing such association is clearly opposed to the will of God, it is inconsistent with the character of the children of light. The second duty of Christians with regard to wicked works is to reprove them. We are not only to have no fellowship with evil-doers, but we should warn them of the punishment to which wickedness exposes them. As "it is a shame to speak of those things which are done of them even in secret," some may find it hard to reprove those guilty of such sins. There are vile deeds that should not be described even for the purpose of rebuking the doers of them, for the slightest allusion to them suffuses the modest with the blush of shame. To spread

out such before the public even with good intentions, whether in the pulpit or the press, may produce more injury than benefit. Seeing, however, that Christians and Christian ministers are commanded to reprove them, we understand our duty to be merely to refer to them in modest language in order to denounce them in the name of the Lord according to his word. Christ and the apostle simply alluded to them; then they condemned them, and declared that they exclude from the kingdom of heaven. It is proper to censure vice by words, but there is no way more effectual to condemn it than by a holy and virtuous life. Sins are called works of darkness for two reasons: 1. They spring from ignorance of God; 2. They are committed in secret. They shun the light, because those who commit them have some sense of their turpitude. This sense of their unseemliness aggravates the guilt of those who do them. They conceal them because they know that exposure would bring reproach upon them, and on account of the shame attached to them, they use still more wicked means to conceal their villany. Those who are enlightened by the Spirit of God should not have fellowship with the works of darkness; for they are placed by God in the world to reprove wickedness. Good men reprove evil ways when they refuse to run with the ungodly in their ungodly courses, and by remonstrating with those who live in sin.

III. Notice the means whereby the Christian maintains a holy walk.

1. His mind receives the light of the gospel. "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord."

The minds of men are darkness while they are in their natural state, and, therefore, they do not obey God; "for the god of this world hath blinded their minds, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." 2 Cor. iv. 4. Men do not readily believe this to be the case, for, while they admit that there is some derangement in the affections by sin, they regard the understanding to be sufficiently sound in its judgments to guide them through life. They consider that their reason is capable of ascertaining their duty. "Behold, thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes." Rom. ii. 17-20. Such is the natural man's opinion of himself. When Christ said that he came into the world "that they which see not might see; and that they that see might be made blind," the Pharisees indignantly said: "Are we blind also?" John ix. 39, 40. Reason, like the eye, does not see itself directly, but

by the aid of a mirror, so that we must be taught to look into the word of God to discover the inability of our natural reason to discern spiritual things. Sinners have their "understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." Eph. iv. 17, 19. Because the understanding, or revealing faculty of the soul, of unrenewed men is but flesh, it cannot discern the glory of Christ. "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee." Mat. xvi. 17. False doctrine, which is a product of the understanding, is said to be one of the works of the flesh. Gal. v. 20. Paul speaks of "fleshly wisdom." 2 Cor. i. 12. "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind." Col. ii. 18. This highest faculty is not only destitute of the truth, but it is corrupt and diseased. "But after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned into fables." 2 Tim. iv. 3, 4. If only the lower part of man were corrupt, it would not then be proper to say that he had the image of the devil in his soul, but only that of the brute; for the devil has no bodily desires because he is a spirit. It is not strictly correct to say that licentiousness, drunkenness, gluttony, and physical violence are devilish, for they are more pro-

perly brutish. The devil's great sin, which is pride, is generated in the understanding. It was by the injection of this poison into the mind of Eve that she aspired to become divine, and was, therefore, induced to eat of the forbidden fruit, which she also gave to her husband. It was his pride that was the cause of the devil's expulsion from heaven, and many by the same sin fall into his condemnation. Proud disputings, which are products of the mind, are said to be devilish (James iii. 15), and so are lies, whose father the devil is (John viii. 44). Indeed all sins proceed from the mind. "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." Mat. xv. 19. We see, then, that our reason is miserably corrupted, and that the power of sin lies in our perverse ignorance. The apostle thanks the Father because he delivered him "from the power of darkness." Col. i. 13.

The state from which believers are rescued is darkness or ignorance, and the state into which they are brought is light or knowledge. The work of grace commences in the understanding. Christ's commission to Paul was that he should go to the Gentiles "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Acts xxvi. 18. Christ calls himself "the light of the world," and the evangelist says: "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." Spiritual life is light; for when

God quickens dead sinners he enlightens their minds in the knowledge of Christ. Many deluded professors of religion are satisfied with mental emotions produced by fleshly excitement without the spiritual illumination of their minds. One of Christ's Mediatorial works is to accomplish this in his people; for as a prophet he enlightens them by revealing to them "by his word and Spirit the will of God for their salvation."

2. To maintain a Christian life we must "walk as children of light."

Believers should use the light of the gospel for instruction, direction, and comfort; and live as becomes those who see the turpitude of sin and the excellence of holiness. This discernment is imparted to them by the Holy Ghost who also produces "goodness, righteousness, and truth" in them. He makes God's people benevolent, so that they become interested in the welfare of others. They "rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." Rom. xii. 15. Once they might be indifferent to the afflictions of others, and seldom felt disposed to give relief; but now, through grace, they desire to aid the needy. Whatever they were before, since their spiritual enlightenment they are upright; they are not only good, but righteous. When in darkness some of them were noted for dishonesty and harshness to their fellow-men, but now they are just and gentle. Because they make the Word of God the rule of their conduct, they

desire to act in all things with a view to glorify him. The Spirit made them virtuous and godly. Their whole character is affected by the change that is wrought in them; for not only do they cultivate morality, but piety also. They do not, as some, cultivate virtue to the neglect of religion, nor religion to the neglect of virtue, but walk in the perfect way of holiness.

IV. Notice the necessity of an upright and holy walk.

1. It is necessary to our own salvation.

Though no good works of ours merit the favour of God and eternal glory, yet we cannot obtain these unless through our love to holiness we obey God. If we live in sin we cannot become fit for the blessedness of heaven. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Heb. xii. 14. A contentious and ungodly man is incapable of entering the abode of God and the saints; he cannot dwell in it, for as everything there is contrary to his nature, it is altogether disagreeable to his taste. Ungodly men and shallow professors of religion flatter themselves with the hope of heaven, but unless they cultivate benevolence, uprightness, and piety they would not enter heaven if permitted to do so; for at the first sight of its glorious purity they would voluntarily flee to outer darkness. In that holy place they would find the

character of every one contrary to their own disposition. How then could they remain where they would be in entire opposition to God and all the saints? We must be made fit for the abodes of blessedness in order to be able to dwell in them with comfort, nor is the preparation for a residence there made without the experimental knowledge of those who are designed for it; for the Holy Ghost incites them to exercise themselves in piety and virtue in obedience to the Word of God in dependence on his grace. Some people fancy that they shall be made ready for glory in some mysterious way without any trouble to them, or any experience of the work of grace in their soul, or any diligence to work out their "own salvation." Indeed many think that no great preparation is needed. These are fatal delusions from which many will be awakened when too late.

2. An upright and holy walk is necessary to our usefulness.

It is by walking as the children of light that we shall be able to prove "what is acceptable unto the Lord," not only for our own guidance and comfort, but also for the instruction of others. By a consistent avoidance of sinful ways, and by a modest avowal of the authority of God, we declare to sinners the folly of their wicked conduct, and by the steadfast discharge of all duties in obedience to his command we practically demonstrate to others "what is acceptable unto the

Lord." On the other hand, if we do not serve God in forsaking iniquity, as well as in the practice of virtue and piety, we confirm sinners in their wickedness and irreligion. None produce these evil effects on others to a greater extent than mere pretenders who loudly profess a hope of heaven, though it is manifest that they are not yet saved from the love of sin. As an instance of this evil result, a person who speaks considerably of his experience of spiritual things is on this account in some measure respected, but if unscrupulous in his dealings, irregular in his attendance on public ordinances, unguarded in his speech, mean in his contributions to support and spread the gospel, he is seriously detrimental to the salvation of his acquaintances, and his evil influence spreads beyond their circle. Such a one does not walk as a child of light, he hinders others from doing so, and he is in danger of going at last into outer darkness.

Observations :

1. Believers have great cause to thank God for giving his Son as the light of the world, and for sending his Spirit to enable them to see the light. It is their duty to show their gratitude by a diligent use of the light that they may increase it for their own, and diffuse it for the benefit of others. The more they walk in the light the better they can see to their own comfort.

2. Sinners know not how they walk or whither they go. At present they are on their way toward endless sorrow in eternal darkness. Though the light shines around them, they neither can nor desire to see. If the light do not shine into their hearts they will not turn unto God. There is, therefore, the most urgent reason that they should cry to God to open their eyes that they may see light in his light.

DISCOURSE XXXIX.

THE BELIEVER'S WALK IN LIGHT.

Eph. v. 13-21: "But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."

SHOULD a person wander and lose his way in the forest, where he is surrounded by wild beasts, he would inevitably perish unless he found his way out, either by discovering a path that leads to safety, or by

finding a faithful guide. Because sinners departed from God they are led to destruction by the allurements of sin; and, unless through a conviction of the danger of their course, accompanied by the light of the knowledge of Christ, they shall be induced to return, they shall be lost for ever. Such as are made to realize their peril, and are persuaded to place themselves under the guidance of God, should walk in the light that he causes to shine on the right path, follow his directions, and avoid the byways into which the devil endeavours to entice them by means of agents which he employs for that purpose. For the safety of those who walk in the true light that guides to heaven, several things are necessary: they should walk circumspectly, make good use of their time, wisely understand the will of God, avoid excess, endeavour to bring others into the light, thank God by the Spirit, and submit to each other in the fear of God.

I. Notice the endeavours which believers should make to bring others to the light.

i. They should reprove their vices.

Though the sins referred to in the preceding verses are so vile that it is a shame even to speak of them, yet they are capable of correction, and those guilty of them may be reformed. However desperate the case of a sinner may appear to us, as he may be saved it is our part to use the means appointed by God

for that purpose. If the light of Divine truth is in ourselves we should bring it to bear upon those who are in darkness, that they may be rescued from vice and restored to holiness. The truth is efficacious for this purpose when it is accompanied by the power of God; but we must be careful that it is the truth that we use, and not substitutes which have no Divine sanction; we must also see that we walk according to the counsels that we give, for we should prove our sincerity by our practice.

2. Believers should proclaim Christ's rousing call to sinners. "Wherefore he saith, Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

As these words are nowhere found in the Old Testament as here expressed some suppose that the apostle quoted from some Christian hymn which was well known to the people, or from some other writing with which the Ephesians were familiar; but the formula "he saith," or "it," that is, the Word of God "saith," is never used in the New Testament except the reference is to the Old. That being the case, we conclude that the apostle expressed the meaning of some passage of Scripture in words that better suited the purpose that he had in view than those in the original. He had probably in his mind the passage in Isaiah which says: "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee."

Isa. lx. 1. The words of the prophet, as also those of the apostle, contain a call to those who are asleep to rise that they may receive the light which the Lord promises to give. Some suppose that dead sinners who are asleep in darkness are here addressed. But if dead, it may be asked, Why attempt to rouse them by calling upon them to arise, for no proclamation that man can make is sufficient to awaken them? It is answered, however, that this is the Lord's way of rousing them from sleep. He accompanies his word, when spoken by his servants, by quickening power so that sinners recognize his voice. "The hour is coming, and now is, that the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." John v. 25. I believe that the impression is sometimes made on reading this passage that sinners are not quite asleep, or that they awake by their own power, and then receive light, but, according to the Word of God, the way in which this work is done is this: Christ by his power quickens, enlightens, and causes them to hear, and though he ordinarily uses his word for this purpose, he is able to produce the change without it. God's people should then, in dependence on his power, bring his word to bear upon sinners. In this work all believers should act, both personally, and also by the agency of such as are formally appointed to proclaim the gospel of Christ.

Though the above use of the exhortation sets forth

a truth, yet from the context and the passage in Isaiah supposed to be referred to, the words seem rather to be addressed to believers who need to be stimulated to greater diligence in the practice of godliness. The wise virgins, as well as the foolish, slumbered and slept while waiting for the bridegroom. Both needed the rousing cry that they might prepare to meet him. God's people are liable to neglect many spiritual exercises that are necessary to their comfortable progress in holiness. When the Ephesian Church, some years after receiving this epistle, "left her first love," the Lord sent her a threatening message, that she might thereby be urged to perform what she previously neglected. "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent." Rev. ii. 5. As this view of the passage agrees with the context and the facts of Christian experience, it seems to be the truth that was in the apostle's mind.

II. Notice the carefulness in their walk that is recommended to the people of God. "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise."

As Christians are bound to enlighten others, and to endeavour to dispel the darkness that is in their hearts, they must carefully see that they do not them-

selves walk in the ways of sin. Because they are children of light, they must not have "fellowship with the works of darkness but rather reprove them." To rescue others from sinful errors, they must walk circumspectly. The meaning is walk strictly by rule, so as not to deviate from the right way. They must follow the directions given by God that they may prove to wicked men that walking in ungodliness leads to destruction, whereas the way of light is eternal life. Believers must not then be fools but wise; not suffering themselves to be led from the path of light by the attractions of novelties in the service of God, by the seductions of sin, or the alluring importunities of the devotees of pleasure.

III. Notice the use that believers should make of time. "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

Wise travellers do not waste, in amusements or indolent ease, the hours that are most suitable for going forward on their journey, but carefully use the most favourable parts of the day. In like manner prudent Christians make the most of time, they earnestly use every part of it with a view to their own advancement on the path of life as well as to stimulate others to pursue the same safe course. Because time is given to us for valuable purposes we should be solicitous to improve it. We have work enough to

occupy it all without wasting any part of it in idleness or worse ; for God has not given any one more of it than his work requires. We need useful knowledge, to the acquirement of which, a portion of our time should be devoted. Many remain all their lifetime deficient in intelligence, because they spend the hours wherein they might exercise themselves in the improvement of their minds in foolish amusement. Many are sadly ignorant of religious truth, because they fail to employ the time in the study of the Word of God. Christians who neglect prayerful self-examination do not make satisfactory progress in spiritual things. We should use our spare time in the devout study of the Scriptures for the purpose of advancing in the knowledge of the mysteries of the Gospel. There is much time lost that might be profitably used in doing good to others. As there are many embarrassed in worldly circumstances who would be prosperous but for their careless waste of time, we should, therefore, use our time always for some good purpose. As this is God's gift to be employed according to his directions for valuable ends, we are not at liberty to spend it as we please ; for we must render an account of our management of it, as well as for all other talents entrusted to us by him. There is all the more urgent reason that we should "redeem the time, because the days are evil." Because sin abounds in the world, we should seize every opportunity for diminishing the evil by the use of the means

which God has appointed for that end. There are many wicked influences that tend to waste time, corrupt morals, and pervert truth. All places have allurements to worldly pleasures which tend to promote vice, the evils of which believers should make manifest by the light of the Word of God and good conduct. The love of pleasure is fast destroying all seriousness and moral health. The community is greatly given to the perusal of fictitious literature. By an examination of the Government reports of the Mechanics' Institutes of the Province of Ontario, one will observe that the reading of this kind of books is excessive, while solid works fitted to instruct in useful knowledge are neglected, and there is cause to fear that there is but little desire for sound religious reading. In this respect the days are evil. Though the perusal of a pure novel is not a sin, yet many are as much under the power of such literature as some infatuated drunkards are under the power of strong drink, nor are the deleterious effects of the one much less than those of the other, though not quite so manifestly injurious. There are about as many intemperate readers of imaginary tales as there are intemperate drinkers of intoxicating liquors, and both are guilty of excess. Light reading may be useful recreation after steady application to serious pursuits, but unless done in moderation, it is dissipation and a waste of time which becomes at last a disease of the mind about as tyranni-

cal as the drunkard's craving appetite. The time spent in ambitious projects is simply thrown away, for the few who gain their object find it no better than vanity. It is hard to calculate the time spent in debauchery, slander, gossip, and other vices, besides what is spent in excessive eating, drinking, and dressing for vain display. Seeing then these evils greatly abound, Christians should be temperate in all things—that they may be diligent in useful work in the fear of God.

IV. Notice the wisdom that should characterize believers. "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."

Because believers are bound to walk as wise men, they must not be useless triflers, but should be able to discriminate between what is true and false, right and wrong, and discern "what the will of the Lord is" with reference to all matters of duty. It is those who honestly yield themselves to God, that they may be guided by his directions, who acquire the power of seeing things as he does. It is those who present their "bodies living sacrifices, holy, and acceptable unto God," and who are "not conformed to this world," but are "transformed by the renewing of their minds," that prove "what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Rom. xii. 1, 2. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." Hosea vi. 3.

"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." John vii. 17. To be wise in understanding the will of God we must submissively follow his directions in what we know.

V. Notice the sobriety which believers must practise. "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit."

In drunkenness there is an un wisdom, or want of sense; the vice is altogether inconsistent with the intelligence of a Christian. The man who has the power of discerning the will of God will not seek exhilaration from strong drink, but from the Holy Ghost, as the apostle recommends. It is as if he said: "Ye desire cheerfulness; seek it, not from wine, but from the Spirit; for in drunkenness there is excess, that is, debauchery or riot, which tends to destruction." The word means what cannot be saved. Drunkenness destroys property, health, life, and, if not forsaken, it destroys the soul for ever; for "drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God." 1 Cor. vi. 10. As men are said to be filled with the Spirit when he controls their thoughts, words, and actions, so does strong drink influence the minds of drunkards to riotous conduct. The Holy Ghost causes the people of God to speak of heavenly things in a gracious manner, and to act in the fear of God; but wine causes drunkards to speak foolish words without sense or reason, and to act like imbeciles or maniacs.

VI. Notice the believer's true joy. "Be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts unto the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Drunkards in their maudlin hilarity give expression to their mirth in bacchanalian songs and coarse jests, but Christians should give utterance to their joy in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs of thanksgiving to God to their mutual edification. From this passage we see that singing was practised in Christian fellowship in apostolic days, and as the gift of musical utterance is in some degree possessed by most people, it should be cultivated that it might be devoutly exercised in the worship of God. The meaning of the terms used here by the apostle would be easily understood by the Ephesians, though we can hardly know the different kinds of religious poetry distinguished by the names "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs." A somewhat elaborate argument in support of the use of instrumental music in public worship is based upon this passage by its advocates, who say that the words "psalms and hymns" mean compositions that were played on instruments; but why one kind of poetry rather than another should be so played, they do not show. Without entering on the controversy on this

subject, we simply state that the words "psalms and hymns" are used in Scripture to denote praise to God on occasions when no instruments could be employed, and that therefore they prove nothing either way. "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises (hymned) unto God." Acts xvi. 25. If the organ in New Testament worship is Scriptural it must be shown to be so in some other way, as even its ablest advocates seem to confess, for this passage is not now relied on as much as it used to be. Without saying more on this disputed point, it is evident that sacred songs should be the subjects of our singing, and that by them we should gratefully praise God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps no part of Divine worship is so ill-performed as this; for in almost all congregations, whether a trained choir, accompanied by an instrument, is used or not, many, often the majority, of the people are entirely silent. This should not be so, for whether they have good voices or not they can follow those who sing even when the tune is new to them, particularly if in plain notes as it should be. If our hearts glowed with grateful admiration of God, we could not easily be silent. When this is not the case people are more interested in the musical strains than in the truths expressed, and often God is not in the thoughts at all. This is a profanity in Divine worship which it is feared is very common, nor do choirs and organs lessen;

aggravate it ; for people for the sensuous enjoyment of it listen to it as they do a secular concert. The praises of God should be sung with devout hearts.

VII. Notice the submission to each other that believers should cultivate. "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."

The meaning is that we should so respect superiors as to render due obedience to them ; for Christianity does not destroy the relations of life, neither does it produce insubordination or disorder, but supports lawful authority. It is infidelity that disorganizes, whereas the religion of the gospel binds society together.

While we should firmly adhere to sound principles, even at the hazard of life and property, we should as much as possible, without betraying the truth, avoid contention. The first requisite to a holy walk is to receive the light into our hearts ; therefore Christ says: "Awake, thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." If believers need the exhortation, much more do those into whose minds the true light has not yet entered.

DISCOURSE XL.

RELATIVE DUTIES OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES.

Eph. v. 21-30: "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

SUBMISSION to one another is enjoined on us in various places in the New Testament. "Be kindly affectionate one to another in brotherly love; in honour preferring one another." Rom. xii. 10. "In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Phil. ii. 3. "Ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder, yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." 1 Peter

v. 5. Men are not isolated individuals, but dependent on each other, and, therefore, mutual submission is a duty. If we loved our brethren this would be easy and pleasant; for then, instead of being jealous of their superiority, we would rejoice in it, and admire their greater abilities. Seeing that independence is impossible, to desire or suppose it is inconsistent with Christian fellowship. Though we are commanded to submit to one another, our submission is not to be irrationally slavish, but "in the fear of God"; for Christ is our supreme Master, and, in all the obedience we render to men, we must have respect to him, so as to act according to his revealed will.

The apostle here applies this general principle to three human relations: those of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants. In this discourse we will consider the first of these.

I. Notice the duty of wives to their husbands.

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord."

1. The submission that wives should render to their husbands is a religious duty, because it is a part of what they owe to Christ. The meaning is not that the wife should render unto her husband such unconditional obedience as she is bound to render to the Lord, for that would be an impious demand on the husband's part, and an idolatrous submission on her

part. Instead of such unreasonable service the wife's obedience is simply what Christ enjoins. When she is dutiful to her husband in what is Divinely commanded, she obeys the Lord; so, therefore, her obedience in the matter is religious, because the Lord is its supreme object. The husband has no right to demand what God does not allow, nor is the wife at liberty to do what the Lord forbids. Seeing this is the state of the case, the yoke of a pious wife may be easy and her burden light, for her obedience is rendered to Christ.

2. The ground of the wife's obligation is the Divinely appointed preëminence of the husband. "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church."

Besides the religious character of the wife's obedience to her husband, like all other moral duties, it has its foundation in nature, for his superiority in physical and mental powers entitles him to command. Notwithstanding exceptions to the rule, he is larger, stronger, and bolder. That this is the case is as plain as that iron is heavier than water. The man is entitled to rule, for he is in this respect "the image and glory of God." 1 Cor. xi. 7. This superiority is not inconsistent with the mutual dependence and essential equality of both sexes in nature and grace, nor with the preëminence of women in other qualities than those which are necessary for authority. While the Scriptures clearly give the right to rule to the husband, they

exalt the wife as a ministering angel to equality and companionship. For her honourable station she is endowed with delicate tact, and intuitive conceptions of what is becoming and proper in all circumstances. Though she does not ordinarily reason laboriously from premises to conclusions, because such is not her taste, or because she does not need to depend on that method as a man does, she quickly discerns what is right without that tedious process.

By the appointment of God the husband stands in a relation to his wife similar to that of Christ to the church, with the important difference, however, that Christ is not only the Head of the church, but its Saviour also. "And he is the Saviour of the body." Though there is an analogy between the headships of the husband and that of Christ, yet Christ is much more than Head to the church, he is its Saviour.

3. The extent of the wife's obligation to obey her husband is here stated. "Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ. so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything."

Though in the relation of Christ to the church there is a peculiarity which has no parallel in the relation of the husband to the wife, for it cannot be said that the husband saved his wife as Christ saved the church; but for all that, the wife should be subject to her husband in everything, as the church is subject to Christ. The wife is not subject as to some things and

independent as to other things, but as to all things. We are not, however, to understand that this gives arbitrary and unlimited power to the husband. The meaning is, that his authority extends over every department, but limited in degree, both by the rights of his wife and the higher authority of God. No superior has a right to force those under him to do what God forbids, or to oppose their doing what he commands. Obedience to superiors is our duty as long as we preserve our allegiance to God, nor is our liberty violated while we do so.

II. Notice the duty of husbands to their wives.

“Husbands, love your wives.”

1. The measure of this duty is the love of Christ to the church. “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it.

As the relation of a husband to his wife is analogous to that of Christ to the church, he is bound to love her as Christ loved the church, even to death, if necessary. If they were both in peril, and the means at hand merely sufficient to save one only, the husband should yield it to his wife at the risk of his own life. Christ's love is both an example and a rule, nor is it to be doubted that genuine conjugal love would cause a good man to sacrifice himself for his wife. This is clearly a law of nature, for any man who selfishly, even to preserve his own life, leaves his wife to perish is held in universal contempt.

As the mind of the apostle was full of admiration of the love of Christ to the church, he here enlarged upon it and the design of his death. "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it might be holy and without blemish." Christ's purpose in his humiliation and death was to prepare the church for its high destiny of being the peculiar object of his delight. From this passage we learn that upon it he has set his distinguishing love. As the love of a true husband to his wife is such as he has for no one else, so does Christ love the church more than all other creatures in the universe; and that the members of the church were his before they knew him and accepted his proposal of union to himself, is clear from the statement: "he loved the church, and gave himself for it." He did this while many of them hated him, and before the greatest number of them had any existence. The church was the special object of Christ's affections from eternity, and it is his purpose to rejoice in his people. This was revealed to the prophet when he said: "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." Isa. lxii. 5. As the wife belongs to her husband alone, so does the church belong exclusively to Christ. It stands in a relation to him which cannot

exist between it and any one else. It is his peculiar property, which he values more than all his other possessions. The union formed between him and his people is more intimate than any that subsists between him and any other creatures. It is a living connection like that between a tree and its branches, and between the head and the body. With regard to his love to them it is compared to the union between a man and his wife, and with regard to his authority over them it is compared to that of fathers over their children, of masters over their servants, and of kings over their subjects.

As the destiny of the church is to be made all that he wishes, in loveliness, holiness, excellence, and dignity, he is preparing her to be fit to sit with him on his throne, and therefore he sanctifies and cleanses her with "the washing of water by the word." The expression "that he might sanctify it" may be understood to mean "that he might separate it for himself;" for the word "sanctify" has that sense often, as in the words of Christ: "For their sakes I sanctify myself," and in those of Paul: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean; but now are they holy." 1 Cor. vii. 14. The word, however, more frequently means in the apostle's writings to purify morally, and we know that the design of Christ's death was to make his people holy.

He accomplishes this purpose by reconciling them to God, so that securing the gift of the Holy Ghost he might cleanse them from the pollution of sin.

In addition to sanctification we have the words: "Cleansing it with the washing of water by the word." This is either in apposition with the former, and signifies the process of purification and the means whereby it is carried on, or, as some think, there is a reference in it to the ordinance of baptism, and that "the washing with water" symbolizes regeneration.* God says of his people: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you," and in the next verse he explains his meaning. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26. It is quite possible that the Ephesians would understand the words to refer to baptism, nor is there any difficulty against that view of the case. Peter said to the people on the day of Pentecost: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sin." Acts ii. 38. Ananias said to Paul: "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins." Acts xxii. 16. It seems quite likely that the apostle refers to baptism, and, indeed, seeing the word "cleansing" is the past parti-

* See Hodge on Ephesians.

ple in the original, it must signify something that is done previous to the process of sanctification, nor can this be anything else but regeneration and pardon of sin of which the water of baptism is a symbol. This view does not give any support to baptismal regeneration, for the passage represents us as having been "cleansed with the washing of water by the word," and may be expressed, "having been cleansed with baptism by the Word of God." Baptism washes away sin just as the word does, not that there is any efficacy in either to do this, nor that sin is taken away every time either is administered, nor that sin is not forgiven without them, but that God uses both as means for that end. We are said to be born again by the word of God, begotten and sanctified by the truth. In a similar way baptism is said to wash away sin, unite us to Christ, and save us. Neither the word nor baptism of itself does these great things, but God when he pleases accomplishes these results when they are administered. Baptism is not a common washing, but an application of water in connection with the Word of God: both the formula of baptism and the promise of regeneration and pardon of which it is the sign and seal, and which is the special object of faith to him who receives the sacrament in a proper spirit. Whether this is the proper exposition of the words or not, the whole passage teaches that Christ by his Spirit purifies his people from sin, and prepares them to be for himself "a glorious church not

having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing : but that it should be holy and without blemish." He will so beautify and adorn it with all moral excellences that it shall be the admiration of all intelligent creatures. The Father will be pleased with it, and Christ shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.

2. The ground of the husband's love to his wife is that she is his own body. "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh ; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church : for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

As Christ loves the church so ought men to love their wives as parts of themselves. The meaning is not to love their wives as they love their own bodies, but to love them because they are their own bodies. As Christ loves his mystical body, the church, so should a man love his conjugal body, his wife. The words do not indicate the measure, but the reason of his love arising from his wife's relation to him as his body. It must, however, be observed that, though so intimately related, the two are not personally identical. When Adam said of Eve : " This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh," there is no doubt that he referred to the fact of her being taken from him, but seeing that is not true in any other case, the expression must mean something more than the manner in which

the woman was formed. Though each has a separate personal existence yet there must be something in the words that is expressive of their relationship. People say that the one is the counterpart of the other, physically, intellectually, and morally, as if neither were perfect without the complement. In this way the wife is so much the body of the husband that it should be as contrary to nature for him to hate her as it is impossible for Christ to hate his mystical body. A man may not be satisfied with his natural body, as it may be feeble, deformed, or diseased, but yet he nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does his people notwithstanding their defects. In like manner, should a man have cause to be dissatisfied with his wife, he should nourish and cherish her because she is his own body.

As the consideration of the duties arising from this relationship led the apostle's mind to the contemplation of the mystery of the relation of Christ to the church, and his affectionate care of his people, we should learn to have our thoughts easily directed to Christ by his works. The fact that a man woos the woman of his choice to become his wife may well lead our minds to Christ's kind proposals to sinners to become his. To all that accept his offer he gives not only riches of grace, but also himself with all that he possesses, and raises them to a rank becoming his own glorious dignity.

DISCOURSE XLI.

THE MYSTICAL UNION.

Eph. v. 30-33: "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself: and let the wife see that she reverence her husband."

MANY expositors consider the expression, "this is a great mystery," to refer to the union formed between Adam and Eve as containing a deeper significance than the fact of their marriage. It is maintained that the apostle taught that, in their conjugal relation, they were types of Christ and the church. That they were typical persons in this sense is granted, but the apostle applies the statement, "this is a great mystery," not to them, but to "Christ and the church." Many things were so obscurely intimated by types under the Old Testament dispensation that they were mysteries then, but under the gospel dispensation they are clearly revealed. There are, however, certain truths, though made known as far as language can do so, that no human mind can fully comprehend. The mystical

union of the church to Christ is of this character: "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." As husband and wife are one flesh, so are Christ and the church. This means not only that believers stand in the same relation to Christ that a man's body sustains to himself, but that they are derived from his flesh and bones in some way analogous to the way in which God took the rib, of which he formed the woman, from Adam's side. The allusion is no doubt to the creation of the first woman, and signifies the church's union to Christ, but perhaps no man can understand the exact meaning of being members "of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

Though the mystery spoken of here does not refer to our first parents, but to the relation of the church to Christ, yet as the former were types of the latter I will direct attention to a few things in which they were so.

I. Divine councils were held with reference to the creation and union of Adam and Eve.

1. The creation of Adam was the subject of Divine consultation. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Gen. i. 26.

Man was made first before we have any intimation of God's purpose to create a partner for him, and so in God's decree Christ as God-man was first appointed, and is, therefore, called "the first-born of every creature," and "the first-born among many brethren."

When Adam was created God held a further consultation concerning him, and said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him," and when God in his eternal purpose chose Christ to the Mediatorial office it was not that he should be alone, but he purposed to create companions to be with him, and these he gave him in the everlasting covenant. Thus they were "chosen in him before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated them unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Eph. i. 4, 5. Christ himself spake to this effect to his disciples when he said: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." John xii. 24. Christ meant that he would not be alone, but would have associates and friends, because such was the Divine purpose, and was also agreeable to his own inclinations. It is as if he had said, My Father from eternity purposed that I should have brethren, and my heart is so set upon them that I will lay down my life to secure for them a right of companionship to me; for it is not meet that I should be in heaven alone with none of like human nature, as I purpose to assume, to share my glory in everlasting blessedness.

2. When God took counsel concerning a fit partner

for Adam he admitted himself into the deliberations. "And the LORD God said, It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him." Gen. ii. 18-20.

In like manner Christ chose not angels, but men, to be his church, his spouse. "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Heb. ii. 16. There were not any creatures fit to become companions to him but men, whose nature it was purposed he would assume. When he viewed all men that were to exist he elected those chosen by the Father in him to be called the seed of Abraham, and he took hold of them to prepare them to be his associates and helps meet for himself. If it be asked, How can men be helps to Christ? we reply that they are not so necessarily, but he is pleased to make them so; his people display his glory, so that the church is the glory of Christ as the wife is the glory of her husband, in the household, her attire, fair appearance, and conduct. A vain woman may dishonour and embarrass her husband by indiscretion and

extravagance, but a prudent wife studies propriety and economy for the purpose of exhibiting her husband's wealth and generosity that he may be admired. As the promotion of her husband's honour is the strongest desire in the heart of a virtuous wife, so is the display of the glory of Christ the church's highest aim. In this laudable purpose the church shall be successful, for Christ will come again "to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." 2 Thes. i. 10. His people give him pleasure, for he says: 'Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty.' Ps. xlv. 10, 11. "Thou shalt be called Heph-zibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married." Isa. lxii. 4. "The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." Zeph. iii. 17. He will at last present the church "to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but it shall be holy, and without blemish," so that he will greatly rejoice in her. She is his fulness. He is the Head, but the head is not complete without the body with all its members in their respective places and in due proportion. The church is, therefore, the complement of Christ mystical.

3. When God created Adam he gave him all

things on earth to use and to rule, but when Eve was formed and married to him she entered upon her husband's rights and honours.

God gave all to Christ, and in virtue of the mystical union, the church has a right to his inheritance and dignity, so that to believers it is said: "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours." 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22. •

II. Notice the creation of the woman.

1. Eve was made from a rib taken out of Adam. "And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman." Gen. ii. 21, 22.

As the woman was taken out of the man so is the church taken out of Christ. The text literally rendered is, "out of his body, out of his flesh, and out of his bones." This is what the apostle calls "a great mystery." It is a truth so profound that we cannot comprehend it. Indeed the most enlightened expositors are unable to ascertain its' meaning clearly. We can, however, clearly understand that the holiness, glory, and every other good thing which the church has, she receives from Christ. "And out of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." John i. 16.

In this sense the church is bone out of his bones. Whatever grace there is in Christ it is imparted to his people as they need, so that in this sense there is a correspondence between him and them. There is, however, more than this in the expression, "we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" Of this various explanations are given; some say that it means no more than the fact of the saints' union to Christ, but it clearly refers to the nature of it; some say that it simply means that believers derive their spiritual life from Christ as Eve derived her physical existence from Adam, but the passage says that not only do we derive our life from Christ, but that we do this from his body, flesh, and bones. Some say that it merely refers to the fact that the church partakes of the nature that Christ took into personal union with himself, but all men, the saved and the reprobate, are equally partakers of that nature; others hold that it means participation of Christ in the sacrament, but many who receive that ordinance do not receive Christ, and some who have never received it are living members of Christ's mystical body. Seeing the text says we are members of Christ's body, and partakers of his flesh, and of his bones; it seems to teach that, as Eve derived her life from the body of Adam, believers derive life from the body, that is, human nature, of Christ, and that as Eve was a partaker of the life of Adam, so are we of the life of Christ. It is not com-

munity of substance, but of life. All living things, that have the power of reproduction, communicate their life to their offspring, so that their nature and character will reappear in their progeny. For instance: sheep transmit their life and specific peculiarities to their young, so that their lambs are like them in nature, form, covering, and habits. An oak derives its specific life from a parent oak, so that it absorbs from the soil and assimilates the same elements that entered into the constitution of the tree from which it sprung, so that its leaves, fruit, form, texture, and nature are like the parent tree. The acorn that fell into the earth had the peculiar property of transmitting the life of the oak whereon it grew to the young oak that sprung from it. In like manner the body (humanity) of Christ by his death transmits his life to his people, so that they grow like him. It must be admitted that for all our explanations and illustrations the mystery still remains.

2. Eve was taken out of Adam's side from the vicinity of his heart to show the wife's equality to the husband, and that she ought to be the peculiar object of his affection. If taken from the foot it might be supposed to suggest his right to tyrannize over her, and if from the head she might consider herself entitled to rule. Because the church was taken from Christ's heart she is the peculiar object of his love; for truly he loves his people more than any other creatures. Of this he has given the clearest proofs, inasmuch as he

gave himself for them that he might save and sanctify them. It seems the piercing of his side has some reference to his affection to the church, at least the evangelist dwells upon it as a significant occurrence.

3. It was when Adam was asleep that the rib from which the woman was formed was taken out of him.

Christ slept the sleep of death that the church might spring from him. Whether Adam's sleep was really typical of the death of Christ or not, there is at least a resemblance between them. In Christ's case the corn of wheat died that it might "bring forth much fruit." John xii. 24. Because his soul was made "an offering for sin he shall see his seed." Isa. liii. 10.

4. After God took the rib from Adam's side he built it up into a woman, and in like manner the church is built with Divine skill. "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Eph. ii. 20-22.

5. As Adam suffered no real injury by the sleep during which one of his ribs was taken from his side, so Christ sustained no permanent loss by his death, but gained brethren and companions. "For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God," so that the church which was formed

from him liveth for ever with him. Because he liveth the church shall live also. John xiv. 19.

III. Notice the union of Adam and Eve.

1. When God made the woman he brought her to Adam. "And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man." Gen. ii. 22.

God, in the covenant of redemption, presented the elect to his Son. He exhibited the church to him in all her glory and beauty, for though she had yet no actual existence, yet in the Divine purpose and plan all her parts and members were accurately delineated. "Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me." Isa. xlix.

16. Besides this eternal transaction, God, at the appointed time which was agreed upon in the covenant, brings to Christ every one given to him therein, and no one else comes to him; for he says himself: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." John vi. 44. Christ declares that he will receive them when thus brought to him. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." John vi. 37.

2. Adam joyfully consented to the union when God brought the woman to him. "And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh:

she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh." Gen. ii. 23, 24.

As Adam cheerfully received the partner that God prepared for him, so does Christ affectionately receive those whom the Father gave him in covenant when he brings them to him by his Spirit in regeneration and faith. Though they all so defiled themselves by sin that they are miserably polluted, yet he casteth out none of them, but purifies and cleanses them "with the washing of water by the word, that he may present them to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that they should be holy and without blemish." He will make them exactly like the pattern presented to him by the Father when he undertook to redeem them from wrath and save them from sin.

IV. Notice the consequence of this union.

1. Adam and Eve became one flesh. "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh."

Though all married couples are one flesh, yet there has not been any wife since Eve who was taken out of her husband, and so "bone out of his bones, and flesh out of his flesh"; she alone had the distin-

guishing honour of being fashioned from a part of the only man who represented his posterity, the whole human race, and was therefore a type of the church as formed also out of Christ, the second man, who represents his spiritual posterity, the redeemed. As Eve was the complement or fulness of Adam, so is the church, the fulness of Christ, his body, without which he would not be complete as God-man.

2. Adam instinctively perceived that in consequence of the marriage relation a man leaves all friends and cleaves to his wife.

Christ in his love to the church left his Father and laid aside his glorious dignity, came to this world in our nature, and submitted to suffering, shame, and death to redeem his spouse from condemnation and punishment, that he might raise her from degradation. Though he was God, and "thought it not robbery to be equal with God; he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Phil. ii. 6-8. "He tabernacled among us," and, like the patriarch Jacob, served the Father for his spouse.

Though the apostle digressed from his exhortation to husbands and wives to a meditation upon the sublime mystery of the union between Christ and the church, he closes by reminding his readers that though

the marriage relation is symbolical of a more important union, yet husbands and wives should not neglect their relative duties to each other. The union of the church to Christ is a great mystery. "Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."

Observations :

1. If Christ left all for us, we should leave all for him. Indeed he demands this, for in the nature of the case we cannot be united to him on any other terms. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." Luke xiv. 26, 27.

2. Christ moves sinners by his word and Spirit.

Though it is the Holy Ghost who quickens and brings sinners to Christ, yet whosoever comes to him, in obedience to his invitation, is certainly received graciously. Some think that they would come to Christ if they knew that the Spirit was drawing them, but no one can hardly know that the Spirit draws him until he comes to Christ. To come to Christ is a sinner's duty, which, if he performs he has then an evidence of the Spirit's operation on his soul.

DISCOURSE XLII.

THE RELATIVE DUTIES OF CHILDREN AND PARENTS.

Eph. vi. 1-4: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

THOUGH the second commandment contains a promise, it is of general application, because it refers to obedience to the whole law; but the fifth contains a promise to children who by obedience honour their parents. It is here called "the first commandment with promise," either because it is the first and only precept in the decalogue with a promise for observing itself, or being the first in the second table of the law, it lays the foundation of all moral duties; for almost all vices spring from family insubordination arising from disobedience to parents. Indeed due submission to superiors includes reverential submission to God, and this is absolutely the first commandment of the moral law.

With this explanation we shall proceed to consider the duty of children to their parents, and of parents to their children.

I: Notice the duty which children owe to their parents. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord : for this is right."

1. The obedience enjoined is obedience "in the Lord."

This not only indicates that the duty to be performed is religious in character, but it also takes it for granted that the children of Christian parents are in the Lord in virtue of their relation to their parents, as some of them really are by a spiritual union to Christ. God has not only impressed the duty of obedience to their parents upon the hearts of children in all ages, but also enjoins it by an express commandment. It is, therefore, to be performed, not only from fear and natural affection, but chiefly from respect to the will of God. It should be an obedience rendered to the Lord, to which consideration all other motives should be subordinate. Should parents demand obedience in matters contrary to God's will, children, when able to discern right from wrong, ought not to obey them to commit sin.

2. The reason for obedience to parents is that it is right.

Until children come to be able to use their reason so as to have conscience toward God, their parents are the highest authority that they can recognize, and they should therefore obey them. Besides this, they owe much to them, for they receive their existence through

them, and during their years of helplessness, they are protected and nourished by them with great affection. God has implanted such wonderful love in parents to their children that they find pleasure in denying themselves for their sake. The love of a mother is a mystery ; it is strong as death, so that in many cases nothing can quench it ; she can endure the greatest privations for the welfare of her offspring, nor can their disobedience and ingratitude extinguish her love. It is the work of God, a fragment of the moral law that he originally impressed on the heart. We know that many fathers toil for years, and deny themselves comforts for the sake of their children ; and if there are parents who unnaturally abandon them, it is because they have become so fearfully depraved as to be inhuman monsters. Notwithstanding such shocking exceptions, children owe more to their parents than they can ever repay. It is therefore right that by affectionate obedience they should treat them with kindness, gratitude, and respect. Besides this reason arising out of the nature of the relation, God distinctly enjoins the duty in the moral law, and refers to it in many places in the Scriptures. "Honour thy father and thy mother." So important is the duty that it was spoken by God to Israel from the top of Mount Sinai out of the midst of the fire, and was engraved by his finger on one of the two tables of stone. Indeed it occupied the place of honour on the second table, because it is really the foundation of all

obligations that men owe to each other ; for all that disregard this commandment cannot discharge their duty to God or man with sincerity. Under the Mosaic economy serious violations of this precept were punished with death. " He that curseth (revileth) his father and mother shall surely be put to death." Ex. xxi. 1 . " If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them ; then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place ; and they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice ; he is a glutton and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones : so shall ye put evil away from among you ; and all Israel shall hear, and fear." Deut. xxi. 18-21. Though Christians do not consider the death penalty for such crimes binding under the gospel dispensation, yet we see the importance of the subject, since God commanded that wicked violations by children of their duty to their parents should, under the old economy, be punished by death.

3. The inducement to the discharge of this duty is a promise of long life. " Honour thy father and mother ; which is the first commandment with promise ; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth."

In the fifth commandment the promise has a specific reference to length of days in the land that God promised to his people Israel, but the apostle here omits the last words and inserts "that it may be well with thee," for the purpose of showing that the promise is made to all dutiful children wherever they may dwell. If it be asked whether it means that all such children shall live long, it is answered that it does not say that they shall, but that they may live long. It reveals God's general purpose with regard to obedient children; and if some of them die young, and others are unsuccessful in life, the promise is fulfilled to so many that we clearly see that filial piety lays the surest foundation of sound health, long life, and temporal prosperity. We sometimes say that if good children die young they obtain long life and happiness in heaven, but there is reason to doubt that the promise refers to that. That some dutiful children are short-lived is no more inconsistent with the promise than is the poverty of some industrious men with the declaration, "The hand of the diligent maketh rich." Prov. x. 4. In both cases we have statements of natural tendencies: as a general rule diligence secures riches, and filial piety is rewarded with long life and prosperity. This is a strong inducement, but it is not the highest motive to obedience; filial affection is superior to it, but the highest motive is the love of God in the heart and respect to his will.

4. As a further incentive to filial obedience we add the well-known fact that undutiful children, as a rule, by leading wicked lives, die miserably. Such conduct generally leads to vices and crimes that produce wretchedness and shorten life. No one who treats his parents with disrespect has any guarantee of a happy life; he has no promise of Divine protection from indulgence in immoral practices which destroy character, and bring death before its natural time. Such are generally plagues to society, and many of them are at last forced to stand in the felon's dock to receive sentence of captivity in prison, or a termination of their miserable career on the gallows. As perhaps no sin is so productive of so much vice and wretchedness as this, parents should be earnestly diligent in training their children in habits of obedience; for, being responsible as a rule for their undutifulness, they are accountable for all the evils that spring from it.

II. This leads us to notice the duty of parents to their children.

1. Observe that there is one thing they are forbidden to do to them. "And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath."

Persons who have no experience in this department of duty may learn from observation that, not only remissness in the exercise of parental authority, but also undue severity produces evil results. Some

conscientious fathers have been known to drive their sons from home by their unreasonable strictness, harsh reproofs, and constant fault-finding. It is not in poor, sinful human nature, whether young or old, to stand such rigorous government. It would be as reasonable for a farmer to sow his fields with thistles for the purpose of obtaining a good crop of wheat as for a father to look for filial obedience as the fruit of his austerity. We often hear it said that children subjected to firm discipline prove worse than those who are reared without any restraints; but in this popular notion there is a want of discrimination, for it is not wise discipline but ill-tempered severity that produces these evil results. What right have parents to expect affectionate submission to their authority when they exercise it with wrathful cruelty? Why should they wonder to find their sons and daughters sulky and obstinate when they set the example to them? Indeed, it would be a marvel if they were otherwise. Sometimes, because the reproof is undeserved and the punishment too severe for the fault, such a sense of injustice is produced that thoughts of revenge are generated, which, when nourished by a succession of cruelties, drive a son to debaucheries to spite his father, or provoke him to leave home altogether to seek kind treatment among strangers. That this charge is given to fathers only is not without significance. We may suppose that it is because fathers are less tender and more resolute

than mothers, they are in greater danger of giving way to harshness. There are, however, peevish mothers, whose constant fretful fault-findings so chill all geniality in their families that consequently their children, when somewhat advancing in strength, seek comfort elsewhere; and the husbands of such peevish women, often, to obtain an hour or two of quiet, spend their evenings in a saloon or tavern, to the entire neglect of their children's training. That this is a fruitful source of ungodliness cannot be doubted.

2. Children should be trained in religion and virtue. "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Nurture is a comprehensive word which includes the process of instruction and discipline, and admonition is the act of reminding a person of his faults and duties. Children should not be allowed to act as they please, but should be instructed in useful knowledge and work, wisely kept under firm, but kind restraint, reminded of their duty, encouraged in well-doing, complimented for faithfulness, and affectionately reprov'd for neglect of duty and for acting contrary to orders. When they are chastised it should be done prayerfully, calmly, and in love. The whole process of training should be religious; for it is "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" that they are to be brought up. When this is not the case, the result is really a failure. Many are trained intellectually and industri-

ally who are entirely neglected morally and spiritually, though the proper cultivation of religious affections is essential to their well-being. As God in Christ is the only true God, Christianity is the only true religion, and therefore the right education of the young is that which is conducted on Christian principles. The authority of God should be brought into contact with the mind, heart, and conscience of the child. It is wrong so to teach a child in such a way as to lead him to regard his parents as the supreme objects of regard, and their authority as the highest in all matters of religion and duty. Being only God's deputies, in faithfulness to him they should impress their children with his sovereign right to implicit obedience from old and young. Education without instruction in gospel truth is undoubtedly an error, for it must be folly to attempt to secure an end by means different from those which God has appointed; consequently, if the government of a country undertake to educate its youth, it is bound to impart religious instruction from the Scriptures, not by select extracts made by its authority, but by the judicious use of the inspired volume; for no government, civil or ecclesiastical, has any right to prescribe what part of the Word of God shall or shall not be used for the purpose. What is the government of a country, that has popular institutions, but representatives of the parents and guardians of the children of the land who are bound to have them instructed in Christian princi-

ples ; and if the government is unable to do this, it seems that it should let education alone altogether. This is well understood in Heathen, Mohammedan, and Popish countries, for there the education that is imparted is religious as well as secular.

To train children successfully both parents and their substitutes should be imbued with the principles of the gospel, for it is then only that they will "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The spirit of Christ should influence their own hearts, that then they would be likely to exert a favourable influence on those under their care. It is manifest that, in many cases, it is the devil that guides the conduct of parents towards their children ; for, instead of uprightness, truth, and the fear of God, they daily set before them an example of hypocrisy, falsehood, and irreligion. When neighbours visit them they express great pleasure to see them, but no sooner are they gone than they speak disrespectfully and maliciously of them before their children, and thus they teach them to regard slander, malice, and hypocrisy as proper conduct. Others bribe their children to obedience by promises of rewards which are never given, so that thus their trustfulness is perniciously undermined. The effect is equally mischievous when punishment is threatened but not inflicted when deserved. A reward may be given for good conduct, but it is better not to promise either reward or punishment beforehand.

But what shall we say of parents who do not worship God in their families, nor attend public ordinances with any regularity, nor acknowledge God at their meals? These are practical heathens who, by their conduct, teach their children that such observances are not necessary, and if they cause them to say their prayers morning and evening, the children are naturally led to suppose that such exercises will not be needed when they grow up, and that devotions are only for little ones.

DISCOURSE XLIII.

THE RELATIVE DUTIES OF MASTERS AND SERVANTS.

Eph. vi. 5-9: "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening; knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him."

THIS section treats of the relative duties of servants and masters. The word "servant" here includes slaves as well as those who work for wages. In apostolic days, though the institution of slavery prevailed

throughout the Roman empire, like despotism, Christ and the apostles neither approved nor condemned it, but exhorted those concerned in it to discharge their respective duties to each other in the fear of God. The Scriptures do not represent either slavery or despotism as necessarily sinful, though both place masters and rulers in positions in which they can oppress their servants and subjects. They are, therefore, undesirable systems, which are altogether contrary to the views and feelings of free communities. Though slavery is not in itself sinful, yet as the laws that regulated the system in many places were wicked and tyrannical, Christian nations abolished it. Notwithstanding this happy change, seeing the relation of master and servant continues, we shall consider the duties arising from it.

I. Notice the duty that servants owe to their masters.

Servants are bound to serve their masters faithfully. "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh." The qualifying expression, "according to the flesh," implies another Master whose authority extends to spiritual as well as bodily service, and to whom, as the Supreme Ruler, masters and servants are responsible.

1. Observe that it is just and equitable that servants should be faithful to their masters.

In free countries the relation formed between them is a matter of agreement wherein each party stipulates to perform certain duties to the other. It is a matter of purchase and sale as much as any other commercial transaction; the servant sells his ability and skill for a stated period to his employer on terms agreed on between them. That being the case, justice demands that both fulfil their engagement. The same principle regulates the transaction as that which ought to guide the merchant in selling goods. A dealer has often an advantage over his customers, as he knows the quality of his wares better than they do; but it is his part to represent them as he believes them to be, and to supply the class and grade that was agreed on. Should he make a contract to supply a family or an institution with certain articles for a certain period, and is found to give a worse quality than he engaged to give, he is liable to a penalty, and if his dishonesty becomes known, he is condemned by the public, and loses custom because confidence in his integrity is destroyed. The case of an unfaithful servant is much the same; for when his character becomes known, his fellows regard him with contempt, and no one cares to employ or trust him in anything. Such a person becomes an outcast whom want exposes to the temptation of resorting to dishonesty in other ways. Probably a large proportion of criminals and tramps are made up from this class.

2. Servants should not only be honourably faithful, but they should discharge their duties with good-will, "Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord and not to men."

There are servants whose aim rises no higher than their own advantage, and all that they wish is to secure it. Such may manifest zealous diligence in the presence of their masters, but out of their sight they neglect their affairs as much as they think this can be done with safety to themselves. They lay the blame of the result of their own carelessness on their fellow-servants without any scruples, when they think it can be done with success. Their selfish meanness makes them bad servants, bad neighbours, bad companions, and bad citizens. Such unprincipled men are found in all ranks of society, occupying private and public positions.

3. On the other hand, while a good servant is alive to his own advantages, he desires to promote the interests of his employer, and faithfully serves him in the fear of God. Because he regards himself as the servant of Christ, he acts with "singleness of heart," so that he discharges his duty "with fear and trembling," that is, with conscientiousness. This strong expression does not mean that he is a servile coward who quakes with fear before his earthly master; no, it is before his heavenly Master that he stands in awe. The apostle

does not here speak of the terror of man but the reverential fear of God. It is the unfaithful that show base servility, whereas an upright man is always brave. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous is bold as a lion." Prov. xxviii. 1. Paul speaks of himself as being with the Corinthians "in fear and in much trembling," and of their reception of Titus "with fear and trembling," and in both cases it was not the fear of man but of God, a holy solicitude to do right. The principle then that should actuate servants is the fear of God, with an honest anxiety to discharge their duty to their masters because God demands it of them. This is the great motive that is fitted to enable Christian servants to do their duty faithfully to wicked as well as to good masters. It was this that sustained Christian bondsmen in the days of the apostle. They knew that the tyrannical harshness with which they were treated was part of the cross that they were to bear as an instrument of their sanctification, and that the contemptuous treatment which good servants received from ungodly masters and mistresses answered the same purpose to all who love God.

4. The encouragement held out to Christian servants is that the discharge of their duty to their masters is a service rendered to the Lord who will reward them. "Knowing that whatsoever good any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."

When, in obedience to his will, we act in anything from a desire to please God, he accepts our labours as done for himself. By this we see how the position and occupation of godly servants are ennobled; they are not only the fellow-servants of holy angels, but even co-workers with Christ. The labour may be mean in its nature, and regarded by many as humbling, but when performed in the fear of God it is honourable and glorious. All of us may find ourselves in positions where we have to perform duties that many may regard as low, but if we find that God would have us do them, let us humble ourselves to do his will in such matters, and we shall find them an honour to us. Angels of light do not consider any thing that God gives them to do to be beneath their dignity, and let us seek grace to have the same holy feelings. Besides the assurance that the obedience of pious servants is accepted by the Lord, he promises a reward and informs them that all men, whatever may be their station in this life, shall stand on a level at his bar. In Christ, people are neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, but all are alike. In this world there are masters and servants, but in the next there will be no such distinctions. At the judgment the question will not be, who is the master, and who the servant, but who did God's will? Then every one will receive according to his works. Whatever then be our positions in this life, let us keep the great day of reckoning before our minds.

II. Notice the duty which masters owe to their servants.

1. They are commanded to treat them in the fear of God. "And, ye masters, do the same things unto them."

This does not mean that masters should obey their servants, but that they should rule them with kindness, and act towards them with the same regard to the authority of God with which the servants are commanded to act towards them. Because masters and servants stand in the same relation to God as his servants, they are brethren, and bound by the same moral obligations. "Masters, give unto your servants that which is right and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven." Col. iv. 1. That means to treat them with justice, respect their rights as men, husbands, fathers, sons, and Christians. Whatever the civil law may be, their privileges are assigned to them by God, and are settled upon them by his revealed will, so that no man can violate their rights without transgressing his will. The law of the land may permit, and even authorize, employers to oppress their workmen, but in doing so they expose themselves to the sure vengeance of heaven. Unjust tyranny of this kind is not at all uncommon, for besides unkind treatment, and withholding a due recompense for their labour some force them to transgress the law of God. There are unprincipled masters who employ their

servants to assist them in defrauding others. Railroad companies often force their servants to work on the Lord's day, not for purposes of "necessity and mercy," as they sometimes allege, but to increase their profits. It may be said that such labourers are free to withdraw from positions wherein they are compelled to commit sin, and it is true that they have the right to do so; but for the most part personal and family considerations are too powerful, because, by refusing to work on the Sabbath, they would lose the means of subsistence. Such people are practically slaves who cannot break their bonds without subjecting themselves to sufferings. In this country the railroads run cattle trains on the Sabbath on the plea of mercy to the beasts, but these trains are often, if not always, partly made up of other freight cars which involve considerable additional labour. It is clear that all this traffic is neither necessary nor merciful to men or beasts, so that the question is, What is the duty of the Christian community of this land with regard to it? Some may say that believers should bring the matter before God in prayer; but if there are practical courses for opposing the evil, these ought to be taken. The matter clearly demands the attention of the people of God; for if it is our duty to remonstrate with these companies for the wrong done to their servants, and to petition the legislature to restrain them by sufficiently stringent laws, we incur the displeasure of God if we neglect to raise our voice

on behalf of the oppressed. God will certainly avenge tyranny and violation of his law, both upon the transgressors and also upon communities that tamely permit the sin without expostulation. Civil law often protects wrong, but God will be avenged on countries that support wicked statutes. "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?" Ps. xciv. 20. The history of the world clearly shows that oppression, as well as other sins, unless repented of, brings sure retribution upon countries, however long it may be delayed. Because the ancient Greeks and Romans enacted cruel slave laws, God at last overthrew their governments by the hands of fierce nations, who crushed them without mercy. He gave the Greeks unto the hands of the insolent Turks, and the Romans he delivered to the Franks, Goths, and Huns. The United States, the last Christian nation that held men in bondage, enacted unjust laws with reference to slaves, but God at last filled the land with the blood of the oppressors. Though slavery does not formally exist among us, working people are sometimes deprived of their natural, moral, and religious rights. It may be impossible to interfere with the tyranny of private masters; but when public companies, who obtain special advantages from the legislature, force their servants to violate Divine law, we are called upon to raise our voice in denunciation of the wrong. If we do not our duty in this matter, we become parties in

the sin from the punishment of which that shall come upon the land in consequence, the present generation may escape, but the generations succeeding it will not. We boast of our patriotism, and often express our desire to promote the prosperity of the country; but if we allow Sabbath profanation to go on without protest we shall clearly help to ruin it.

2. Masters are forbidden to treat their servants with harshness. "Forbearing threatening."

This includes all contemptuous treatment, ill-temper, and severity; and the benevolent prohibition is strengthened by the consideration that masters as well as servants have a Master in heaven to whom they must give an account of their conduct in this as well as in everything else. There are ill-tempered spirits who find pleasure in causing pain by rude taunts and angry reproofs, but such are punished immediately, for they are seldom served faithfully. When their character becomes known, efficient and honest servants avoid them.

Observations :

1. Those admonitions that are so common in the Scriptures show us, that if all men were to submit to the gospel, and to act according to its principles, this world would be full of comfort. Then every person, whether master or servant, would desire to discharge his duty in the fear of God, nor would it signify so

much whether governments would be absolute or liberal, and whether workmen would be hired or bondmen, were kindness and equity to prevail universally.

2. Let no one think that rank or position, whether high or low, will secure to him the favour of God, for "there is no respect of persons with him." If the prince and the peasant, the master and the servant, serve him faithfully he treats them on an equal footing, and rewards them according to their fidelity.

3. The gospel invites all to become servants of Christ, whose holy, benevolent, and just character is a guarantee of kind treatment. Though so many have already engaged with him there is room and work for more. We, therefore, assure sinners, even the very servants of the devil, that, if they come to Christ, they shall be graciously received.

DISCOURSE XLIV.

THE GREAT CONFLICT.

Eph. vi. 10-18: " Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

WHEN Christ warned his disciples of the danger of giving offence, and enjoined upon them the duty of forgiving their brethren when they might trespass against them, they were convinced of their natural vindictiveness, and prayed the Lord to increase their faith. Their discovery of their inability to overcome the evil principles that so powerfully influenced their hearts was healthy, because it shut them up to trust in

Christ and his grace. Their experience was the same as that of all believers who discover their own weakness and the power of the spiritual enemies that oppose them. They saw that they had no strength to do as they were commanded, and as their hearts were sound, they besought the Lord to equip them for the conflict, and to uphold them therein. Though the redemption purchased by Christ is complete, yet those who obtain it must "work out their own salvation" in the midst of a fierce and protracted contest. The Christian warfare is real, difficult, and dangerous; for in it believers are severely tried, often deeply wounded, and many, who seem to engage in it are miserably defeated to their utter destruction. Serious mistakes are often made by some who engage in this war, because many, who do not clearly understand its nature, under-estimate the power of the enemy, they trust to means that are not suited to the work. Such people go forth armed with carnal weapons to fight spiritual enemies, but the apostle, knowing the inefficiency of these, instructed the Ephesians in the matter, set before them the safe course to pursue, and described the armour with which they should be equipped.

We shall consider the nature of this conflict, the enemy opposed to God's people, and the course they should pursue.

I. Notice the nature of the conflict.

1. It is neither a physical nor an intellectual combat.

Great warriors, who subdued powerful nations, never entered into conflict with these mighty foes, and many, who, in their pride of intellect, suppose that they can discover all truths and overcome all false principles by the power of their reason, are overcome in the contest, and are made captives by deadly errors which beguile them away from sound doctrine. Such are "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." For "in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God." 1 Cor. i. 21.

2. It is not a mere moral conflict.

The principal matters in dispute are spiritual, so that virtue and vice are among the objects for which the contest is carried on, for they have an influence on men's spiritual prosperity; but the victory will never be obtained over the enemy as long as the war is waged on the field of moral duties alone. There were mighty men who strove vigorously in the interest of mere virtue, but they gained no solid advantage either to themselves or to others, and they fell in the struggle at last. The matters chiefly in dispute are faith in Jesus Christ, justification by faith, repentance unto life, adoption with its privileges, sanctification, gospel hope, eternal life and glory. In securing these, natural intellect, however well trained, and legal morality, however well cultivated, can accomplish nothing.

II. Notice the enemy.

1. He is neither material nor human. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood."

"Flesh and blood" here mean men, and by the passage we are taught that, notwithstanding many severe conflicts with each other carried on by people in this world about material, moral, and religious objects, it is not of these the apostle speaks here, but of more valuable things and more powerful antagonists. We admit that human opposition is a matter of so serious a nature that it often overcomes the good resolutions of many who mean to become religious and virtuous; but we hold that those who overcome the opposition of the evil influence exerted by ungodly friends must be armed by more than the natural weapons of prudence and force of character. As the warfare referred to here is waged on a more elevated field, the enemy is of a higher nature than that of men.

2. We observe then that the foe is spiritual and mighty. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Seeing the opponents described in this catalogue are devils, it seems that they occupy various ranks, and that they carry on operations suited to their elevated positions. By "principalities" we under-

stand those of them who are the highest in rank ; by "powers," those who are invested with authority ; by "rulers of the darkness of this world," the spiritual agents of the kingdom of darkness who deceive men by delusive errors whereby they exert their great ability to keep people in ignorance of every gospel truth.* They do their utmost to keep the word of God from men, and in this effort they have had great success. In some countries they stir up priests and rulers to prevent the entrance of the light among the people, but in this department they are rapidly losing their power. In Christian lands, where the Word of God has free course, they prevail on multitudes to keep away from it, so that besides those whose attendance on public worship is irregular, there is a numerous class who seldom appear in the house of God. These despise the ordinances of the gospel ; but the devils do not, for knowing their power, they prevail on their dupes to keep away from them. They make ungodly people believe that they absent themselves from the house of God merely because the preaching is feeble and unattractive. By crafty misrepresentation they prevail on sinners to remain in spiritual darkness, nor are they anywhere more diligently employed in this work than where the light of the gospel shines the clearest. "Spiritual wickedness," or wicked spirits, may mean all the fallen angels, or a distinct class of

* See Hodge on the passage.

them whose peculiar department it is to provoke men to wickedness, filling the minds of some with envy, malice, revenge, leading some to give expression to the contents of their evil hearts in backbiting, slander, and rude speech.* The hearts of many they swell with self-conceit and haughtiness; they inflame the nature of others by impure thoughts which often lead to obscene speech and licentious acts. They provoke some profane fools to speak the language of fiends in giving utterance to wicked imprecations, and they allure multitudes to dissolute conduct. In these cases there is little or no conflict, for the world is lying in wickedness, and sinners are led captive by the devil at his will. It is between evil spirits and believers that the great struggle is carried on in the exalted field of spiritual things. In this conflict the saints must either conquer or be destroyed, for the contest is deadly.

III. Notice then the conduct necessary to believers in this warfare.

The apostle gives them clear directions with regard to preparation and behaviour.

1. He exhorts them to muster their forces for the fight.

If we had no distinct information on this subject we might think that the only force available was our own power; and on this natural men wholly rely,

* See Hodge on the passage.

though they are clearly without excuse, for the apostle says : " Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." The first requisite, then, for fighting honourably in this combat is to become united to Christ ; we need to be in him in order to be strong in him. The arm of a hero is strong while it has a living connection with his body, but if cut off, its power is gone. " I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit ; for without me ye can do nothing." John xv. 5. To rush into this conflict, as so many do, without union with Christ, and without trust in his power, is highly foolish. He who so acts does not understand what is before him ; indeed he will not resist the devil whatever he may fancy. The enemy only makes sport of his feeble attacks, however highly the dupe himself may estimate them. He may vigorously denounce certain vices, but while he is separate from Christ the devil laughs at him.

2. He commands them to be equipped with proper armour. " Put on the whole armour of God."

This means the defensive armour and weapons of attack which God has provided for his people. They are not human inventions, nor does any natural man appreciate them. Though they are devised, prepared, and offered by God, sinners despise and refuse them, because they do not understand their value. Natural wisdom has so much more confidence in worldly wea-

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pons that even the church, to the serious injury of her spiritual prosperity, has trusted too much in the devices of men. Instead of being satisfied with the means which God prepared, many of her members provided for themselves human weapons, which her rulers authoritatively ordered the whole church to use. From this madness resulted the most serious errors that have afflicted her, the shameful defeats which she has received, and her inefficiency to this time in overthrowing the kingdom of darkness. In her early history ritualism and asceticism took the place of faith and holiness, so that, instead of looking for support to God by believing prayer, people invoked saints and angels, and for gospel holiness substituted withdrawal from society and its duties to the solitudes of deserts and mountains, or to the artificial discipline and devotions of monasteries. As family life had its temptations, many bound themselves by vows to a life of celibacy. As they encountered the enemy in society, instead of resisting him manfully in the strength of the Lord, according to his directions, they betook themselves to flight, deserted their brethren, and left the foe in possession of the field. When the clear-sighted apostle saw the manifestations of this fatal error, he warned the followers of Christ of its unscriptural character and mischievous consequences. "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly

puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (touch not; taste not; handle not; which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have a show of wisdom in will-worship and humility, and neglecting of the body." Col. ii. 18-22. "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their consciences seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth." 1 Tim. iv. 1-3. These were the weapons that men preferred to the armour of God, and whereby they thought that they would more successfully overcome the devil; but it was that astute spirit that deluded them into the fatal mistake of giving heed to "seducing spirits and doctrines of devils," who knew well that asceticism would increase the evils it was expected to overcome.

Instead of human devices we are commanded to take "the whole armour of God," the various parts of which are here enumerated:

(1) The girdle of truth. "Having your loins girt about with truth."

This might be thought to mean sincerity, but, though a valuable virtue, it belongs to believers already, whereas this is something which they are to take. The truth, then, wherewith the loins are girt is the saving knowledge and belief of the truth of the gospel. This is indispensable to the Christian soldier. To be ignorant of the gospel, or doubting it, is to be blind or lame, a condition in which no person is fit to enter the conflict of battle, or if he does, he will be surely trampled in the dust. As in ancient times the girdle gave freedom of action, when the flowing robes then worn were gathered up, and were by it closely tied round the body; so does the truth spiritually apprehended give liberty and courage. Without this no one can stand for a moment before the assaults of these mighty enemies who are not earthly but heavenly, inasmuch as they were originally created there, and, though they were cast out when they lost their first estate, they retained their great wisdom and power. Against these angels, great in might, reason, speculations, dead orthodoxy, ritualism, and aceticism make but a girdle of rotten straw. Nothing but the truth in the heart can give strength and confidence to stand firm in this fight.

(2) The coat of mail. "Having on the breastplate of righteousness."

This means not a mere plate on the breast, but the

armour that covered the bodies of ancient warriors from the neck to the thighs. The English word "breast-plate" led many to suppose that no defence is provided for the backs of believers, but this is a mistake, for Christ, by his righteousness, protects his people before and behind. The cuirass, as here meant, covered the trunk of the body all round, so does Christ's righteousness, whereby we are justified, cover us completely. Without his coat of mail the warrior was naked, and exposed to every blow, thrust, and dart from the enemy, and unless we are protected by the righteousness of Christ we shall be surely slain. In this contest our own righteousness, however excellent we may regard it, and whatever care we bestow upon it to make it strong and comely, will be no better than spiders' webs.

(3) The covering for the feet. "And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace."

This may be regarded as referring to the shoes and greaves whereby the feet, legs, and thighs were protected. In ancient warfare such a defence gave a person confidence, ease, and readiness in all his movements; and in the Christian conflict the peace produced by the saving knowledge of the gospel gives alacrity in the service of God, both in obedience and in resisting the devil. A due appreciation of the love of God causes willingness, hopefulness, and cheerful readiness to perform every duty, and to face all dangers in obedience to God.

(4) The shield. "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

The word used by the apostle refers to the large shield which, as it was four feet in length and two feet and a half in breadth, defended the whole body. According to the meaning of the word it was an oblong, of the shape of a door, composed of light, though strong, material, so that it could be easily moved by the left hand, to which it was securely fastened. The metaphor indicates that faith protects the soldier of Christ from fatal injuries. As "the wicked one" does cast darts, the shield of faith is of great value to the Christian. Nor does he use common, but fiery darts that burn in the wound which they inflict. As in modern warfare, red-hot shot is fired into the fortresses of the enemy, that, by producing a conflagration, the stronghold may be destroyed, so also in ancient days, arrows and darts, with combustibles wrapped about them, were set on fire when about to be shot at the enemy, so that, burning in the flesh when they struck, they caused much pain and terror. Some believers are often miserably disturbed with the devil's fiery darts of evil thoughts, blasphemy, and infidelity; others are tormented with the hellish fire of jealousy, malice, wrath, discontentment, and revenge; and others have their lower passions excited, so that if they had no faith to quench them they would burn within them until they would

change them into devils. These darts do not cause any great alarm in the ungodly, but as believers cannot endure them they must have them quenched.

(5) The helmet. "And take the helmet of salvation."

As the helmet, with its beautiful plumes and other decorations, is the greatest ornament of the warrior's armour, so does salvation adorn the Christian, as well as protect him, so that, retaining his presence of mind in danger, he holds up his head with confidence. As he realizes that he is one of the redeemed, who has been translated "from darkness to light, and from the kingdom of Satan to that of God's dear Son," he withstands the enemy with hopeful firmness.

3. In addition to defensive armour the Christian soldier must have a weapon of attack. "Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

This means the sword which the Holy Ghost has provided, consisting of the words which God has spoken to men, and caused to be written for their direction. It is simply the Scriptures, the Word of God that, by the power of Christ, the source of life, is made "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword." We see, then, that the believer must not stand altogether on the defensive; he must also attack, and to do so effectively he must be so well acquainted with his weapon as to know how to handle it expertly. He needs to look to the Lord to give him

strength, steadiness, and sharpness of eye to watch his great antagonist, parry his blows, and strike home at the proper time. He must be careful not to use any other weapon that men may recommend, however well it may look ; some have done this to their own loss and to the detriment of their comrades. To substitute anything for the word is presumption and folly that cannot fail to injure those who oppose the devil by such means, and damage the cause of true religion and sound morality.

4. Seeing that, besides armour of proof and a sword of heavenly temper, we must obtain help from One mightier than ourselves, we are commanded to pray "always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

Observe that, as the conflict between the saints and the devil is still going on, Christ, who is enlisting soldiers to fight for him against the powers of darkness, heartily invites sinners to enter his service. Whoever consents to receive the armour of God and the sword of the Spirit shall obtain a right to offer prayers and supplications to God, with a promise of support in the contest, of victory in due time, and of a glorious reward at last.

DISCOURSE XLV.

HOW BELIEVERS OBTAIN THE POWER NEEDED TO SUSTAIN THEM IN THE SPIRITUAL CONFLICT.

Eph. vi. 18-20: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds; that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."

THOUGH those who are in Christ sincerely resolve, in the strength of the Lord, to war "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places," and for this purpose have taken "unto them the whole armour of God," yet they must look to God himself for power to sustain them in the mighty conflict. They are, therefore, commanded to pray "always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."

Prayer is a declaration of trust in God, together with submission to his will, and implies a sense of dependence.

I. Notice the value of prayer.

The connection of this passage with the preceding

context seems to be : "Stand therefore . . . with all prayer and supplication, praying" on all occasions "in the Spirit." There is reference made to two kinds of addresses to God : prayers and supplications. Prayer may be regarded as a general term including all our petitions to God, and supplication as an urgent request for special blessings as occasion requires. As we are altogether dependent on God we always need his aid to support, comfort, and strengthen us to discharge our duty. It is not sufficient that we put on the spiritual panoply ; we must look to God for power, activity, and skill to withstand the assaults of our mighty foes. He encourages us to do this, and graciously promises to sustain us in reply to our requests. There is no safety for us but in him ; for there were renowned soldiers of God, who, when they neglected prayer, were severely wounded by the enemy. When Israel fought with Amalek, they prevailed while Moses held up his hands to heaven, but they lost ground when he let them down. Aaron and Hur, seeing this, "took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon ; and they stayed up his hands, the one on the one side and the other on the other side ; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek with the edge of the sword." Ex. xvii. 11-13. When David, Peter, and others neglected this exercise they were temporarily overcome to their painful hurt, and if we knew

the spiritual history of Christians with whom we are acquainted, we would find that much of their distress and slow progress in spirituality arise from the same cause. When we fail to maintain living communication with God, the world with its pleasing allurements fills our hearts, and so powerfully influences our affections when opened to them, that, even against conscience, we follow it, and decline the cross, because the carnal mind overbears the weak spark of godliness that may be in us, so that thus our spiritual life remains stunted. We need not be surprised at this when we undertake to fight the hosts of darkness without Divine aid. If this is the case of many believers through neglect of prayer, it is no wonder that sinners, who know not Christ and the gospel, so manifestly choose the enticing amusements of the world in preference to God and his ordinances. Of the value of prayer to believers we have many testimonies in Scripture. James, in his recommendation of it to those in distress, says: "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth for the space of three years and six months, and he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." James v. 17, 18.

- II. Notice the different kinds and occasions of prayer. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication."

Christ spake the parable of the importunate widow to encourage his disciples "to pray always, and not to faint," and the apostle says: "Pray without ceasing." There are three regular seasons of prayer that all should observe: public worship on Sabbath, family prayers, and secret devotions. Seeing that by Divine appointment there are stated times for the holy exercise occurring at regular intervals, it is evident that those who neglect prayer cannot withstand the adversary. Indeed they are not in opposition to him at all, whatever they may think of the matter. Natural men do not resist the devil, but fight on his side against Christ; they "lie in wickedness," they are "led captive" by the devil "at his will"; for though he stirs up disorder among men, he does not wish to disturb sinners in such a way as may awaken them from their spiritual slumbers. It is true that all men fear him, but it is God's people that really pray to be sustained in their opposition to him not only at stated times but always. It is certainly practicable to pray in the mind continuously, and if many believers fail in maintaining the actual exercise, some of them so cultivate a praying spirit that their hearts readily turn to God in times of distress. Many are so far from God in thoughts and affections that they do not easily look to him at any time, and when they do cry to him, they have no reasonable hope. We should so accustom ourselves to mental prayer that it would become a habit. This,

however, we cannot do unless we obey God and maintain a good conscience, for "two cannot walk together except they be agreed." Amos iii. 3. If we go with the world in opposition to our moral impulses, mental prayer cannot possibly be practised. Those saints, of whom it was said that they walked with God, were upright and faithful men.

III. Notice the manner in which we may maintain the habit of prayer. "Watching thereunto with all perseverance."

1. We should watch to maintain a praying spirit. We ought to keep awake in order to be always ready to avail ourselves of every opportunity, and to seize upon every occasion for prayer and supplication. We should diligently watch against the allurements of sin that insidiously draw our minds from God. Lawful objects, occupations, and exercises, necessarily occupy our thoughts, but we may have God with us in these. If, however, we follow what conscience condemns, we cannot have courage to ask the favour of God. Here we have a test whereby we may ascertain what is lawful and safe to pursue; for if we cannot have comfortable communion with God in any pursuit, employment, entertainment, or company, it is at the peril of our souls we follow it, or go where we doubt that God will accompany us as our friend. Let us, therefore, watch to maintain a praying frame of spirit.

2. We should persevere in prayer.

Through the power of the carnal mind and our many infirmities we are liable to become weary in maintaining spiritual mindedness, so that we too often fall into a prayerless state. It is not enough to begin the practice with some zeal, as some do in times of religious excitement, or when some unusual impression is made on their minds, but to continue the exercise with steadfast earnestness. When in comfortable circumstances so that nothing greatly troubles us, nor any evil is seriously apprehended, we are tempted to relax our diligence; and when sensible of making no progress towards spiritual joy we are apt to conclude that, as our prayers are not heard, we may as well give up the exercise. People's faith is variously tried that their real character may become manifest. Christ says that he who continues to the end shall be saved, and the apostle says: "Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." Gal. vi. 9.

IV. Notice the aid provided to enable us to pray successfully. "Praying always . . . in the Spirit."

The phrase "in the Spirit" does not mean in our own hearts, but by the Holy Ghost. Though the Holy Spirit, who enlightened the minds of the saints in Old Testament times, enabled them to cry to God in their

distress, and to ask his favour, yet God promised that the new order of things, which he purposed to introduce, would be permanently the dispensation of the Spirit, and said: "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications." Zech. xii. 10. Christ promised to send him to his disciples as the Comforter. Paul says: "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Rom. viii. 26. Many prayers are made which are not acceptable to God, and, therefore, procure no aid to sustain those who offer them in the great conflict, because they are not "in the Spirit," but merely lip service, or the carnal desires of the natural heart. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." James iv. 3. When the Holy Ghost moves us to pray he gives simplicity, uprightness, and a gospel expectation of obtaining the help needed. The rule given to us is: "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." James i. 5-7. We need the Spirit to enable us to ask things agreeable to God in faith.

V. Notice the persons for whom we ought to pray.
“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance for all saints ; and for me.”

1. We should pray for ourselves and all saints.

The conflict in which believers are engaged with the powers of darkness is not a single combat between an individual Christian and the devil, but a war between all the followers of Christ and the whole host of fallen angels. In a battle between two great armies, he is not a loyal soldier who cares only for himself ; for a faithful warrior is concerned for the whole host of which he is a member, because his own safety depends on the success of his comrades. Much more is this the case in the army of Christ, where each is not only a soldier, but all are brethren, because living members of the same mystical body, so that, if even one were destroyed, the body would be so far maimed to the detriment of all. Though this cannot occur, each member of it cares as much for the rest as if it could. Those professors who do not seek the welfare of the brethren are not loyal followers of Christ, neither are they living members of him. By the presence or absence of this generous feeling we may ascertain our relation to Christ. “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer : and ye know

that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." 1 John iii. 14-16.

2. The fact that the apostle demanded their prayer for him shows that Christians are bound to pray for the ministers of the gospel, particularly for those who labour among themselves. Paul attached such importance to intercessory prayer, and had such faith in its efficacy, that he often enjoined it, and earnestly solicited it in his own behalf. In this case he intimated to the Ephesians what he wished them to ask for him. "Praying always . . . for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel." He begged of them to intercede for him with the Lord that spiritual liberty, confidence, and speech might be given to him when engaged in preaching. If he did not prize the mere attractions of rhetoric for its own sake, or for the human applause which it secured, he desired the power of making known "the mystery of the gospel" with clearness for the sake of its success, and for the honour of Christ. For the same reason all Christian ministers need the prayers of the people, and to these they are entitled. When their hearers fail in this duty towards them, the work of the Lord does not prosper among them; and often the inefficiency of the minister is blamed when they ought to condemn themselves, and

resolve by grace to do their duty in time to come. There is a tendency to leave all to ministers, and expect success, though no intercession is made for them at the throne of grace. This is undutiful, unreasonable, and unjust. However diligent ministers may be in preparation, the power of the preaching depends largely on the prayers of the people; for utterance may fail when needed, not, perhaps, so much ability to speak the truths meditated on, but spiritual freedom of mind to deliver the great message with unction and power. If we neglect our duty in this matter, whether ministers or hearers, we are sure to suffer loss. As the apostle was an ambassador for the work of the gospel, so are all ministers of Christ, and though, in modern days, they cannot plead bonds and imprisonment as an argument to induce their hearers to pray for them, yet they are entitled to this kindness; and it is for the interest of the people themselves that they should faithfully discharge this duty, so that preachers might be enabled to proclaim the word with boldness, as they ought to speak. Seeing that in this passage the duty of Christians is set clearly before them, they may see that the success of the cause of Christ largely depends on them. It is evident that preaching to edification and the conversion of sinners is to a considerable extent in their hands. They should then resolve, in the strength of God's grace, to pray for the servants of Christ, as it is the part of ministers to join them in this spiritual

exercise. Believers desire to grow in grace, knowledge, and consolation, and to see sinners turning from ungodliness to Christ; they should, therefore, awaken to their duty in this matter. Many bewail the deadness of the church, the lowness of religion, and the prevalence of ungodliness; and not a few who do so never in their life interceded with God for the ministers of the gospel. To hear a prayerless, graceless, and conceited professor flippantly pretending to deplore the church's neglect of the outcasts of the land and the unfaithfulness of her office-bearers is simply contemptible. No doubt Christians, both ministers and people, need to be awakened to greater devotedness, but none need it more than hypocritical pretenders to earnestness, who find their chief pleasure in censuring others, particularly those who fear God.

Sinners should also call on the Lord for his Spirit to give them the light of his knowledge that they may delight in himself, his ordinances, and law; and that they may lose their carnal taste for frivolous, unprofitable, and sinful pleasures. They necessarily desire enjoyment, but while they are ignorant of the holy pleasures of communion with God and the elevating joys of spiritual religion, they will seek them in the world, if not too often in forbidden things. Let them, therefore, seek the Lord, for whosoever calls on his name shall be saved.

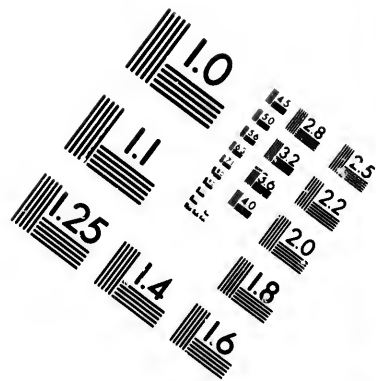
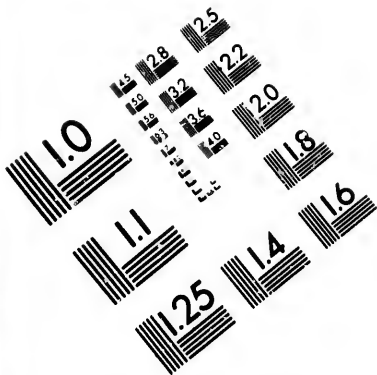
DISCOURSE XLVI.

THE VALEDICTORY.

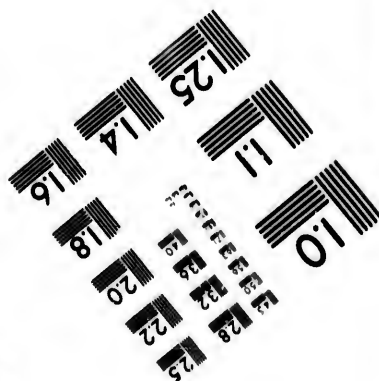
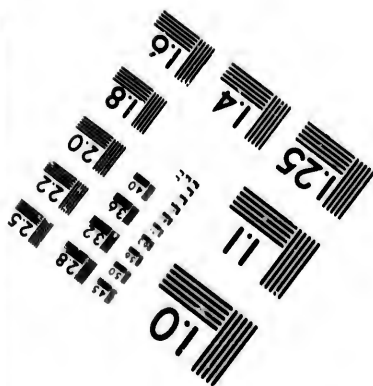
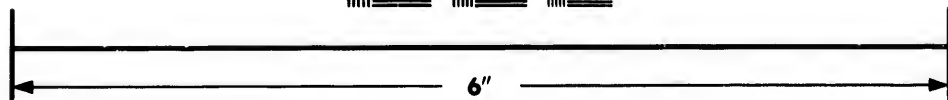
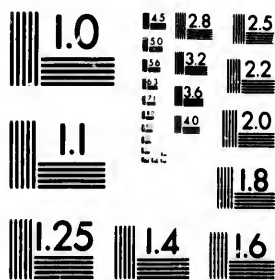
Eph. vi. 21-24: "But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts. Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen."

THE apostle requested an interest in the prayers of the Ephesians "that utterance" might "be given unto" him, so that he might "open his mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel." That they might discharge this Christian duty towards him with intelligence he sent a competent messenger to inform them of his affairs, and also to comfort their hearts. It is proper that the people should know the condition, afflictions, and trials of their ministers, that they may bring their case before the Lord in prayer, in order that in answer to their supplications they might be relieved and encouraged. It is well when there is such confidence between them that they can frankly open their minds to each other. It added not a little to the comfort of the apostle that he had with him in Tychicus





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11.8
15.0
18.0
22.5
28.0
36.0
45.0
56.0
71.0
90.0

a trusty fellow labourer, "a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord," whom he could employ in this delicate mission. Having stated that he sent a reliable messenger to visit them, not merely to deliver the epistle, but to give them explanations of its contents with all proper information concerning the apostle's situation in his imprisonment for the gospel, he concluded with the usual farewell: "Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen." In this expression of the apostle's good wishes he desires that they should obtain from God several indispensable blessings, and these we shall now consider.

I. Notice the blessings which the apostle wished them to receive.

1. "Peace."

By this the apostle did not mean brotherly concord merely, but the enjoyment of peace with God as the fruit of his favour.

Natural men cannot have satisfactory peace. Thoughtless people, both young and old, do not clearly apprehend the displeasure of God and the danger to which they are exposed as transgressors of his law. Notwithstanding a secret feeling of distrust, when such think of God at all they try to persuade themselves that he so abounds in mercy that they have no great

cause to be seriously alarmed. They have quietness because they seldom think of the God against whom they have sinned, and because they have no living conception of the severity of his justice. Others experience a disturbance of their peace by a view of their guilt and an apprehension of merited punishment, but a reaction of their feelings into a state of composure produced by a reformation of life or the performance of devotional exercises soothes their fears, so as to give them such hope as causes them to speak peace to themselves, though they have not made peace with God by faith in Christ and true repentance. These form the majority of the inhabitants of Christian lands; they "say peace and safety," but at last "sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." 1 Thes. v. 3. To shut one's eyes upon real danger is foolishness; Jonah's sleep in the midst of the tempest did not protect him from the danger to which he was exposed. The fancied security of the commander of an army, who, during the jollity of an evening's entertainment, refuses to receive the report of his faithful scouts concerning the menacing movements of the enemy, will not protect his camp when suddenly attacked in the darkness of the night. The mad carelessness of the man, who refused to read the letter sent by a friend to warn him of the approach of an assassin, cost him his life. He was so captivated with the hilarity of the feast, of

which along with others he partook, that he would not apply his mind to any serious business, but before morning he was slain by the dagger of his stealthy enemy. Through similar carelessness many lose their souls ; they will not give due attention to their dangerous position, and so they perish at last.

True peace is obtained in one way only ; all other methods are delusions. Heathens and Romanists seek it in religious rites, self-tortures, and asceticism, but they do so in vain ; many bearing the Christian name expect to secure it by religious ceremonies invented by men ; some believe that they obtain it because they are pleased with sensuous performances which soothe or excite the natural sensibilities, and even some, who adhere to Divinely authorized forms of worship, mistake pleasurable emotions for the peace of God. Multitudes expect that legal obedience will produce true peace. Saul of Tarsus thought this, and few, if any, pursued that course more sincerely, more carefully, and more zealously than he did, but "when the commandment came, sin revived, and he died." Rom. vii. 9. When instructed by the Spirit he discovered his mistake, and then "knowing that no man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even he believed in Jesus Christ that he might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law : for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Gal. ii. 16. He could then say : "What

things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ, yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord ; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Phil. iii. 7-9. We see then that true peace is communicated to a man's heart when he is justified by faith in Christ, nor is there any other possible way of obtaining it.

2. The effect of God's peace is love with increase of faith.

Those who are justified by faith have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and these love God and his people. Until a sinner intelligently appreciates the goodness, kindness, and amiableness of God he cannot love him, though to do so is the first commandment of the law, by nonconformity to which a man exposes himself to eternal punishment. Until God is known in the face of Jesus Christ as the God of grace and mercy, who pardons sinners in accordance with his holiness, justice, and truth, he is regarded as either altogether indulgent, or unnecessarily severe and is, therefore, either disrespected, or hated. When the mind is spiritually enlightened, the affections go forth to God with such power that we

trustingly yield ourselves to him to be guided as he pleases. The love of God in the heart is accompanied with confidence in his goodness.

Next to the love of God, in importance, stands love to the brethren. Few duties are more urgently impressed on believers than the exercise of charity. Christ, before his departure, strongly recommended his disciples to love one another. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." John xiii. 34, 35. Indeed there is no better evidence of godliness than charity. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." 1 John iii. 14. On the other hand, there is no plainer proof of hypocrisy in professors than strife, bitterness, malice, and backbiting. "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." 1 John iii. 14, 15. Paul recommends this grace above all spiritual gifts. "Covet earnestly," says he, "the best gifts; and yet show I unto you a more excellent way," and then he proceeds to describe the good qualities of that more excellent way, which is charity. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not

easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity."

1 Cor. xii. 31—xiii. 4-8, 13.

3. Though faith is the instrument whereby true peace and love are produced, the apostle speaks here of faith in its growth and continued exercise.

When faith is evangelical it is not one solitary act, but a permanent resting on Christ by a belief of the testimony of God in his word. However lively the first exercise of faith may be it is capable of growth in power, and as all graces, including faith, are bestowed by God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, the apostle looked to these Divine persons to sustain these graces in the souls of the Ephesians. He knew the value of the healthy growth of faith and love, and that without them there could be no peace. Faith procures peace, works by love, and powerfully influences the life to holiness; for it purifies the heart and overcomes the world. Where there is no saving faith, the world rules, but as soon as it is implanted by the Holy Ghost the world is dethroned, so that faith rules.

II. Notice those to whom he wished these blessings. "Peace to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

1. Observe that those who have this peace are brethren.

Paul, by the term "brethren," invariably means believers or members of the same Christian community, and that form of the word is used in the same sense throughout the New Testament. We are commanded to cultivate brotherly love, inasmuch as Christ set us an example by laying down his life for his brethren; and the apostle Paul rejoiced in his sufferings for them. Col. i. 24. Here he prays that they may enjoy all good things. "Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith."

2. Such was the apostle's love to the Ephesians that it made him so earnest in his prayer for them that he repeats the same kind wish in other words, and says: "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen." His admiration of Christ was such that his heart embraced all who loved him. Prompted at another time by his regard for him he said: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." 1 Cor. xvi. 23. This agrees with the sentiments of the Psalmist: "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I

grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with a perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies." Ps. cxxxix. 21, 22. Believers have made an alliance with God, so that his friends are their friends, and his foes their foes. Some tell us that as the spirit of the New Testament is milder than that of the Old, the sentiments of believers under both dispensations differ accordingly. Though this view is generally accepted, it is not true; for, notwithstanding the change of ordinances, we find on examination the same principles in both parts of the Word of God, and that the feelings of the saints of both dispensations towards the friends and enemies of God are virtually the same. External arrangements may change, but living principles are permanent. To love those who love our friends, whom we admire for their goodness, is natural, nor can we be pleased with those who show their hatred of them. It is our duty to love and forgive our enemies; but we cannot, without unfaithfulness, forgive the declared enemies of our friends until they are reconciled to them.

The love of Christ to believers is said here to be in sincerity, but the word in the original means incorruptible or immortal. It might be rendered an undying or eternal love. Christ loved them with an eternal love, and by his grace their love to him will continue for ever. Love to Christ is a necessary preparation for the blessedness of heaven, but the want of it deserves

perdition. If any one does not love God as revealed in his Son Jesus Christ, by whom he makes the clearest manifestations of himself, he cannot love him at all, and, therefore, Unitarianism cannot be true religion.

Observations :

1. If we love Christ we admire his character, we are satisfied with his work, we are able to trust him and we obey his commandments. It is vain to profess affection for him unless we have submitted to his will, with a desire to follow all his directions. If we are sincere in this matter we seek his presence, and we give evidence of this by a regular waiting upon him in all the ordinances that he has appointed. If this be correct, how can those who causelessly absent themselves from Divine worship love God? The matter demands our attention, for one answer only can be given to it.

2. Those who love Christ love his people. If we then fail in this we have a clear evidence of our want of affectionate regard for him. Let us not deceive ourselves in this matter, for "if a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?"

3. Consider your peril, sinners, for "if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." That means to be bound over as a sacri-

rice to Divine justice, that he may be consigned to eternal fire when the Lord will come to judgment. God now offers peace to every one who will come by faith to Christ, and is pleading with men by his providence, word, and Spirit. Do not reject his offer of grace. You are ignorant of God and the way of reconciliation ; but if you look to him for instruction, he will give you light with peace, love, and faith.

“Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.”

Finis.

